# It Was a Lover and His Lass

Mrs Oliphant

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VOL. I.

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BY

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"ADAM GRAEME OF MOSSGRAY,"
ETC., ETC.

Truly, young gentlemen . . . there was no great matter in the ditty.
*As You Like It.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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# IT WAS A LOVER AND HIS LASS.

## CHAPTER I.

THERE stands in one of the northern counties of Scotland, in the midst of a wild and wooded landscape, with the background of a fine range of hills, and the vicinity of a noble trout-stream, a great palace, uninhabited and unfinished. It is of the French-Scottish style of architecture, but more French than Scotch—a little Louvre planted in the midst of a great park and fine woods, by which, could a traveller pass, as in the days of Mr. G. P. R. James, on a summer evening when the sun had set, and find himself suddenly face to face with such an edifice amid such a solitude, the effect even upon the most hardened British tourist would be

something extraordinary. There it stands, white and splendid, raising its turreted roofs, such a house as a prince might live in, for which scores of servants would be needful, and which would accommodate dozens of guests; but all naked, vacant, and silent, the glassless windows like empty sockets without eyes, the rooms all unfinished, grass growing on the broad steps that lead up to the great barricaded door, and weeds flourishing upon the approach.

Round about it are avenues of an exotic splendour, like the building, tall araucarias of kin to nothing else that flourishes in Scotland, blue-green pines of a rare species, and around these, in long-drawn circles, lines of level green terraces, upon which you can walk for miles—terraces more fit for Versailles than for Murkley, where the grass is generally wet, and promenades of this kind not very practicable for the greater part of the year. The pines have taken hold of the soil, have thriven and flourished, the araucarias are unequalled in Great Britain. Nature and the landscape have assimilated them, and made them free of the country in which they are to stand for ages. But the house, being of human-kind, cannot be thus assimilated.

No kindly growth naturalises it, no softening of years makes it fit into its place. It is too big and imposing to be run over by honeysuckles and roses like a cottage; it stands like a ghost among all the paths that lead to its blocked-up door. The rows of melancholy openings where windows ought to be glare out in their emptiness, in contrast with that door which never opens, and makes all natural access to the place impossible. An army of tramps might clamber in at the windows, and make carnival in the vacant rooms, but the master of the house could not without an organised assault find admittance in the recognised way. At night, or when the evening glooms are falling, nothing can be more startling than to stray into the presence of this huge thing, which is not a habitation, and which seems, all complete yet so incomplete, to have strayed into regions quite uncongenial and out of sympathy with it, where it stands as much out of its element as a stranded boat.

But all the same there is nothing ghostly or terrible about Murkley Castle. It involves no particular mystery of any kind—nothing but the folly of a man who built a house without counting the cost, and who found himself with-

out means to complete, far less enjoy, the palace he had constructed. Not the less is it a strange feature in the landscape, and it would be still stranger if popular superstition did not see sights and hear sounds in it of nights, for which the wiser persons in the country declared they could not account, though of course they did not believe in anything supernatural. This was the reason given by the driver of the gig from the 'George' at Kilmorley for the round he wanted to make on a certain June night in the lingering daylight, as he conducted the gentleman reckoned as No. 5 in the books at the 'George' to Murkley village, where this ill-advised person, not knowing when he was well off, as the 'George' was of opinion, meant to establish himself at the village inn, which was no better than a public-house.

'It's no from ony superstition,' the driver said. 'I'm no a man, I hope, to be feared for ghosts; I'm mair feared for flesh and blood. I've a good watch in my pocket, and life's sweet, and if it's tramps, as is maist likely, that have a howff in the auld castle, and mak' a' thae noises to frichten the countryside, the mair reason, say I, to gi'e the auld castle a wide berth.'

'But it's daylight,' said the traveller; for, after all, as in the days of Mr. G. P. R. James, it is a traveller of whose early impressions the historian avails himself; 'and there are two of us; and that beast of yours could surely show a clean pair of heels——'

He spoke with a slight accent which was foreign, but which the countryman took to be 'high English:' and had certain little foreign ways, which Duncan was not clever enough to understand. He responded, cautiously,

'Oh, ay; she'll gang weel enough—but a mare ye see's a flighty creature—they're mair nervous than a fine leddy—and, if they think they see something they canna account for——'

'But, man alive!' cried the stranger, 'you're not afraid of ghosts in broad daylight.'

'I'm no speaking about ghosts—and ye ca' this braid daylicht! It's just the eeriest licht I ever saw. Do you ken what o'clock it is? Nine o'clock at nicht, and ye can see as plain as if it was nine in the morning. I come from the South mysel', and I'm no used to it. Nor it's no canny either. It's no the sun, it's no the moon; what is it? Just the kind of time,

in my opinion, that ye might see onything—even if it wasna there——'

This lucid description gave our traveller great pleasure.

'I had not thought of that,' he said, 'but it is quite true. Here is a half-crown for you, if you will drive by Murkley—is it Murkley you said?'

'You kent a' about Murkley when you made up your mind to make your habitation there,' said Duncan, with a glance of suspicion. 'If you ken the village, ye maun ken the castle. They're ower proud to have such a ferly near them, thae ignorant folk.'

'You don't mean to win the half-crown,' said the other, with a good-humoured laugh.

Duncan, who had slackened his pace when the offer was made, and evidently, notwithstanding his ungracious remark, contemplated turning, which was not so easy in the narrow road, here suddenly jerked his mare round with an impatience which almost brought her on her hind quarters. 'It's of nae consequence to me,' he said.

But this clearly meant not the half-crown, but the change of route. They went in through a

gate, to which a castellated lodge had been attached, but the place was empty, like the castle itself. A slight uncertainty of light, like a film in the air, began to gather as they came in sight of the house, not darkening so much as confusing the silvery clearness of the sky and crystalline air. This was all new to the stranger. He had never been out in such an unearthly, long-continued day. It was like fairyland, or dreamland, he could not tell which. The evenings he had known had been those rapid ones, in which darkness succeeds day with scarcely any interval; this fairy radiance gave him a strange delight, the pleasure of novelty mingling with the higher pleasure of a beauty which is exquisite and has scarcely any parallel. It seemed to him the very poetry of the North, the sentiment—far less glowing and passionate, yet, at the same time, less matter of fact than that to which he was accustomed—of the visionary land into which he had come. He did not know Scotland, nor yet England, though nobody could more pride himself on the quality of an Englishman. He knew Ossian, which had delighted him, as it delights the fancy of those who know nothing about its supposed

birthplace. To be sure, storm was the Ossianic atmosphere, and nothing could be more completely removed from any indication of storm than this. The sky was like an opal descending into purest yellow, remounting into a visionary faint blue, just touched with gossamer veils of cloud. It was not like the glories he had read of a midnight sun. It was like nothing he had ever read of. And into this strange, unearthly light suddenly arose the great white bulk of the palace, with its rows upon rows of hollow eyes looking out into space. Lewis Grantley started, in spite of himself, at the sight, and, what was more remarkable, the mare started too, and required all the efforts of her driver to hold her in.

'I tellt ye!' Duncan said, with a smothered oath, directed at the horse or his companion, it would be difficult to say which. He did not himself so much as look at the great house, giving his entire attention to the mare, whom he held in with all his might, with a lowering countenance and every sign of unwilling submission, when Grantley bid him draw up in front of the castle. Two or three minutes afterwards, the stranger waved his hand; and the animal

darted on like an arrow from a bow. She scarcely drew breath, flashing along through the avenue at full speed, till they reached the further gate, which was opened for them by a respectable woman, neat and trim, as one under the eye of her master. Lewis could only perceive among the trees the small *tourelles* of an old house as they darted out of the gate.

'I'll no get her soothered down till she's in her ain stable,' Duncan said. 'Your half-a-crown's hard won. She'll just pu' my hands off on the road hame, with her stable at the hinder end, and this pawnic in her. And now ye have seen it are you muckle the better for it? That's what I aye ask when folk risk their necks for the pleasure of their een.'

'My good fellow,' said Lewis, 'are all Scotchmen, I would like to know, as uncivil as you?'

A spark of humour kindled in Duncan's eyes.

'No—no a',' he said, with a somewhat perplexing confusion of vowels, and burst into a sudden laugh. 'And even me, my bark's worse than my bite,' he added, with an amused look. Then, after a pause, 'You're a gentleman that can tak' a joke. I like that sort. The English

are maistly awfu' serious. They just glower at ye. You've maybe been in this countryside before?'

'Never before. I have never been in Scotland before, nor in England either, for that matter,' said the young man.

'Lord sake!' cried Duncan, 'and where may ye belong to, when you are at hame?'

But the stranger did not carry his complacency so far as this. He said, somewhat abruptly,

'Do you know anything about the family to whom that place belongs?'

'Do I ken onything about—— It's weel seen you've no acquaintance with this countryside,' said Duncan. 'What should a person ken about if no the Murrays? Was it the Murrays ye were meaning? I ken as much about them as ony man, whaever the other may be. My sister cam' frae Moffatt with them—that's my caulf-ground—and my little Bessy is in the kitchen, and coming on grand. I can tell you everything about them, if that's what you want.'

'Oh, not so much as that,' said Grantley; 'I am not so curious. Do they intend to finish the Murkley Castle?' he asked.

'Finish it! Oh, man, but it's little you ken.

I'll tell ye the haill story, if you like. You see there was old Sir Patrick. He was the man that biggit yon muckle castle; but his siller failed, and he took a disgust at it; then he gaed abroad, and things turned, and he got his money back. But do ye think he was the man to do like other folk, to let it go to them that had a right? Na, na, ye're out of your reckoning. He was an auld fool—him that had a son, and grandchildren, and a' that—what must he do but take up with some urchin he picked out of the streets, and pet it, and make of it, and set it up for a gentleman, and leave all his siller to that.'

Lewis Grantley had started again at this description. He said, hastily,

'How do you know that it was out of the streets? How do you know——' and then he stopped short, and laughed. 'Tell the story, my good fellow, your own way.'

'I'll do that,' said Duncan, who despised the permission. 'Out o' the streets or no out o' the streets, it was some adventurer-lad that took the fancy o' the auld man. True flesh and blood will not aye make itself over agreèable, and the short and the long is that he left all his

siller to the young fellow, that was not a drap's blood to him, and left the muckle castle and the little castle and twa-three auld acres mortgaged to their full valley to his son. He couldn't help that, that was the bit that was settled, and that he couldn't will away.'

The young man listened with great interest, with now and then a movement of surprise. He did not speak at first; then he said, with a long breath,

'That was surely a very strange thing to do.'

'Ay was it—an awfu' strange thing—but Sir Patrick was aye what's ca'ed an eccentric, and ye never could tell what he wouldna do. That's Murkley down yonder, on the water-side. Ye'll be a keen fisher, I'm thinking, to think o' living there.'

'And the son?' said the young man. 'I suppose he had behaved badly to his father. It could not be for nothing that he was disinherited. You people who know everything, I suppose you know the cause too.'

'The general?' said Duncan. 'Well, he wasna a saint: and when an auld man lives twice as long as is expected, and his son is as auld as himself, there's little thought of obedience to him

then, ye may weel suppose. The general had a way of pleasing himself. He married a lady that was thought a grand match, and she turned out to have very little; and syne when she was dead he married anither that had nothing ava, and I suppose he never asked Sir Patrick's consent. If it was that, or if it was something else, how can I tell? But you'll no find many men to beat the general. They're a' very proud of him in this countryside.'

'I thought he was dead,' said the young man, hurriedly.

'Oh, ay, he's deed: and now it's the misses that has it. I have the maist interest in them, for, as I tellt ye—but ye were paying no attention—Moffatt, where their little bit place is, is my caulf-ground. They're living in the auld castle, just by the gate we came through. Lord, if he had been content with the auld castle, it would have been better for them a' this day. But 'deed I shouldna say that matters. It would have gane in every probability to yon creature I was telling ye of, the foreign lad.'

'You don't seem,' said the stranger, with a laugh, 'to have much charity for this foreign lad. Are you sure he is foreign, by the way?'

'Ye'll maybe ken him, that ye ha'e a doubt,' said the sharp-witted countryman.

'How should I know him?' the young man replied, with a peculiar smile.

'I say foreign, for nae Englishman—or maybe rather nae Scotchman, for I am no so clear of the other side—would do such a dirty trick. Take a doited auld man's siller that had kith and kin and lawfu' progeny of his ain. Fiech! I couldna do it if I was starving. And I ha'e a wife and bairns, which are things that are aye craving for siller. The Lord haud us out o' temptation! But I wouldna do it—no, if I was master of mysel'.'

'I did not know,' said Grantley, with a forced gaiety, 'that you were so scrupulous in Scotland. It is not the character you usually get in the world. But you are harsh judges all the same. Perhaps this unfortunate fellow did not know the circumstances. Perhaps——'

'Unfortinate! with the Lord kens how mony thoosands! I dinna ca' that misfortune, for my part.'

'But then to balance the thousands he has not the privilege of possessing your esteem,'

Grantley said. He had an air of anger and pain under the pretended lightness of his tone, and meant to be bitterly satirical, forgetting evidently, in the warmth of the feelings raised by these animadversions, that the critic by his side was not very likely to be reached by shafts of this kind.

Duncan gave him a stolid stare.

'Ye'll be joking?' he said.

The young man perceived the ludicrousness of his attempted sarcasm, and burst into a laugh which was somewhat agitated, but betrayed no secret to Duncan, who joined in it quite good-humouredly; but, growing grave immediately, added,

'That's a' very weel. What I'm thinking of him's nae importance, nor what's thought in the countryside; but for a' that it's an ill thing to scandaleeze your fellow-creatures, whether they're folk of consequence or no. Yon's the "Murkley Arms," and Adam at the door. Ye maun be an awfu' keen fisher, sir, as I was saying, to leave a grand house like the "George" for a country public, for it's no to call an inn—just a public, and no more. Here, Adam, here's a gentleman I've brought you; you'll have to give me a good dram for handsel, and him your best room, and

as many trout as he can set his face to. He deserves it for coming here.'

The person thus addressed was a tall man, with a red beard, revealing only about a quarter of a countenance, who stood smoking and leaning against the doorway of the 'Murkley Arms.' He looked up, but somewhat languidly, at the appeal, and said,

'Ay, Duncan, is that you?' with the greatest composure without deranging himself. Thereupon Duncan jumped down, throwing the reins on the mare's neck, who was much subdued by her rapid progress, and besides had the habit of standing still before the door of a 'public.'

'And hoo's a' wi' ye, and hoo's the fushing?' Duncan said, plunging into an immediate conversation with his friend, at which Grantley, first in consternation, afterwards in amusement, listened with only partial understanding, but a most comical sense of his own complete unimportance and the total want of interest in him of the new world into which he was thrown. He sat for about five minutes (as he thought) quietly surveying from that elevation the village street, the river in the distance, the homely sights and sounds of the evening. Cows were coming home

from the riverside meadows, and wondering no doubt why night and milking-time were so long of coming; the children were still about in the road, the men in groups here and there, the women at the doors. They said to each other as a chance passenger went by, 'It's a bonnie nicht,' interrupting the quiet now and then by a scream at Jeanie or Jackey adjuring them to 'come in to their beds.' 'They should be a' in their beds, thae bairns; but what can ye do when it's sae lang light?' the mothers said to each other.

Young Lewis Grantley in the leisure and surprise of his youth, still fresh and pleased with everything novel he saw, was well enough occupied in contemplating all this, and in no hurry to assert his own consequence as a visitor. But by-and-by he got tired of his eminence and jumped down from the dog-cart; the sound disturbed the lively conversation at the inn door.

'Lord, we've forgotten the gentleman,' said Duncan.

Long Adam took no notice of the gentleman, but he put his hand to his mouth and called 'Jennit!' in a sort of soft bellow, thunderous and rolling into the air like a distant explosion.

In a minute more quick steps came pattering along the brick-paved passage.

'What's it noo?' said a brisk voice. 'A gentleman. Losh me! what am I to do with a gentleman?—no a thing in the house, and the curtains aff a' the beds. I think ye're crackit, Duncan Davidson, to bring a gentleman to me.'

'He's crackit himself to want to come, but I have nae wyte o't,' said Duncan. 'Would you have had me tak' him to Luckie Todd's? They'll take him in, and welcome there.'

'No, I wouldna be so illwilly as that,' said the woman, with a laugh: and she advanced and looked curiously at the neat portmanteau and dressing-bag, which no one had attempted to take down from the dog-cart. 'Ye'll be for the fushin',' she said, dubiously; but the absence of all a fisherman's accountrements struck Janet with surprise. She added, with a slight sigh of care, 'I can give you a good bed, sir, if you're no particular about your curtains; the curtains is a' doon on account o' the hot weather; and something to eat, if you can put up with onything that's going for the night. I'll promise you a fine caller trout the morn,' she said, with a smile. 'But, ye see, it's rare,

rare that we have onybody here by the folk of the town; and it's drink that's a' they're heeding,' she added, with a shake of her head.

'I am not hard to please,' said Grantley, with the little accent which Duncan had taken for 'high English.'

Janet, better informed, made a little pause, and looked at her visitor again. The lingering light had got more and more confused, though it was nothing like dark. Janet's idea of 'a foreigner,' which was not flattering, was that of a dark-bearded, cloak-enveloped conspirator. The light, youthful figure, and smooth face of the new arrival did not intimidate her. She took down the bag briskly from the dog-cart, and bid her husband give himself a shake and see if he had spirit enough to bring in the gentleman's portmanteau; then at last, after so many delays, beckoned to him to follow her, and led the way upstairs.

## CHAPTER II.

THE village of Murkley next morning bore an aspect wonderfully different from that of the enchanted dreamland of the previous night. In that wonderful light, everything had been softened and beatified—a sort of living romance was in the air; the evening softness and the strange magic of the lingering light had given a charm to everything. When Lewis Grantley looked out next morning, the prospect was not so idyllic. The 'Murkley Arms' was in the centre of the village, where the street widened into a sort of *place* by no means unlike that of a French country town of small dimensions. The house exactly opposite was an old one, with a projecting gable and outside stair, washed with a warm yellow, such as the instincts of an earlier age found desirable, and

with excellent effect, in a climate never too brilliant. There were two or three of these old houses about, which gave a quiet brightness to the grey stone and blue slate which, alas, were in the majority. The road was partly causewayed and partly in a state of nature—and mud: though the dryness of the weather about which everybody remarked, though it had not specially struck the stranger, had kept this in check. A handful of hay dropped here and there, a few stalks of straw or other litter, gave a careless look to the place, which otherwise was not disorderly. The little stone houses, with the blue-slated roofs, had a look of comfort. It was not half so pretty, but it was a great deal more well-off than many villages the stranger knew, and he recognized the difference. He could scarcely, by craning his neck, get a glimpse from his window of the river, which, with one or two rare bits of meadow on its bank, disappeared immediately below under woods and over-hanging cliffs.

The room from which Lewis Grantley made these observations was immediately above the front-door, where he had stood so long, with amused astonishment, watching the leisurely

proceedings of his hosts, downstairs. It was an old-fashioned parlour, with a red and green carpet on the floor, a red and blue cover on the table, furniture of mahogany and black haircloth, and a large sideboard like a catafalque. A slight mustiness, as of a place long shut up, was in the air, but this was counteracted by a huge bouquet of hawthorn thrust into a large jug which stood upon the sideboard. The blossom of the thorn is not May in Scotland: were it to take the name of a month, it would be June. There was not much refinement in the manner of this decoration, but it was fresh and fragrant; and the windows were open, and the 'caller trout,' for which Mrs. Janet had pledged herself, cooked as fish can only be cooked when it is newly out of the water, was on the table, along with the tea, 'masked' to Janet's own taste, black and bitter, but with a jug of mollifying cream by the side of it, 'baps' and 'scones,' by no means to be despised, and sweet butter, free from any suspicion of salt, furnished forth the table. Grantley did not disdain these dainties. He made an excellent breakfast; and everything was so fresh and new to him, that

to look out of the window was enough to amuse him, and the absence of a newspaper, and of various other accompaniments of breakfast in town, did not disturb his comfort in the least. Grantley did not know anything about town indeed, and had no regrets when he found himself in the silent atmosphere of this strange little place. He had a very serious purpose in coming, but apart from that it was pleasant enough to see new sights, and breathe an air to which he was unaccustomed.

His upbringing had been of a curious kind. He was the son of English parents, born (let us say for the sake of brevity, and according to the fashion of our country) 'abroad,' which may, of course, be anywhere, from one side of the world to the other: but was, in the present case, on the European continent, and amidst the highest civilization. He had grown up there rather in the subjection and quiescence of a French boy during his school-time, than in the freedom of an English one, and at seventeen had been left orphaned and penniless amid people who were very kind to him, but who did not know what to do with the desolate boy. It was at this crisis, in his mourning clothes, his eyes dim

with watching and weeping, that he attracted the attention of a desolate old Englishman, wandering vaguely about the world, as it seemed, with nothing to interest or attract him. It is not necessary to be good in order to be kind, and old Sir Patrick Murray, though he had cast off his own family, and cared nothing for his flesh and blood, was not without a capacity of love in him, and was as desolate in his old age as any orphan could be in his youth. He was appealed to, as being an Englishman, in favour of the child of the English pair who were dead. They were not of exalted condition; the father was a clerk in the Vice-Consul's office, the mother had come 'abroad' as a nursery governess, no more. Their child spoke English badly, and though he was furious in defence of his nationality, knew nothing about the habits of his race, and had never been in England in his life. Sir Patrick took him as he might have taken a puppy in the same desolate circumstances. The lad was about his house for a month or two, reading for him, arranging his papers, fulfilling offices which were only 'not menial,' as the advertisements say. He was browner than an English lad, and more domestic, with no pres-

sure upon him of games to be played or athletic duties to fulfil, and perhaps more soft in his manner, with warmer demonstrations of gratitude and youthful enthusiasm for his benefactor than an English youth could have shown. By degrees he got into the old man's heart. They left the place of young Grantley's birth, and thus cut all the ties he had of human association. There were some relatives at home he had never seen, and one of them had written to say that his sister's son should not want while he had anything, and that the boy 'of course' must come to him; but none of the others took any notice, and even this open-hearted person was evidently very glad and relieved in no small degree when he was informed that a rich old Englishman had taken his nephew up.

'I hope you will do nothing to forfeit his kindness,' this uncle wrote, 'for, though you should have come to us and welcome had you been destitute, we are poor people, and it is far better that you should have to depend on yourself.'

This was all Lewis had in the world out of old Sir Patrick's favour, but that favour was bestowed upon him all the more liberally that

he had nobody, just as the old man declared *he* had nobody, to care for him.

'We'll stand by each other,' Sir Patrick said. And no doubt there is a standing ground upon which old age and youth can meet which is wanting when one of the two involved is an old man and the other a middle-aged one. Sir Patrick scarcely remembered his son, who had been away from him by far the greater part of his life, and had shown very clearly, when they met, that a man of fifty is on too great an equality with another man of seventy-five to leave much room for filial feeling. The general thought his father (frankly) an old bore, and could not forgive him for that ridiculous palace, the new Murkley, which Sir Patrick had built in his youth. But to Lewis Grantley his noble patron was no old bore, but the most gracious of gentlemen and the kindest of fathers. The lad looked up to him with a kind of adoration. What did he know about the Scotch relations? and, if he had known, he would not have cared. It seemed natural to him that a man should know nothing about his relations. It was his own case.

They travelled about everywhere, the old man and the young one, the tie between them

growing closer every day. When Sir Patrick got too weak to travel, Lewis nursed and served him like the most devoted of sons. It was only when a letter came with prodigious black borders, about a year before Sir Patrick's death, announcing that of General Murray, that the young fellow became aware that his old friend had a son. But except that a dinner-party was put off, and a hatband put on, no other notice was taken of the loss, and it faded out of the favourite's mind as a matter of no importance either to himself or anyone else. When Sir Patrick died, Lewis mourned as sincerely as ever child mourned a parent, and was as much startled to find himself the master of a large fortune, left to him by this second father, as if he had been seventeen instead of twenty-five; for all this time, eight long years, had passed since his adoption by the kind old man to whose service he had devoted himself with an *insouciance* more characteristic of the country of his birth than of the race to which he belonged.

During Sir Patrick's life he had received an allowance which was enough for his wants, and he had scarcely begun to awaken out of his grief to the consciousness that he must do some-

thing else for his living when the extraordinary intimation was made to him that he was a rich man. It may be thought strange that a young man of five-and-twenty should continue, without a profession or any further apparent hopes, devoted to the service of an old benefactor who had never made him any promises, and taking no thought as to what his future was to be, when that old benefactor in the course of nature should be taken from him. But such things are possible enough. The young man was not afraid of the future. He had never expected anything but to face it when the time came. He was of an easy temperament, not troubled about what would happen to-morrow. And why should Sir Patrick die? He did not forestal that event, nor make sure of it till it came. Afterwards he must do what he could—he was not afraid.

But it overwhelmed the young man when he was told of all he had gained by the death of his old friend. He had not even known how rich Sir Patrick was. His income might have ended with him for anything Lewis knew; he had never inquired what his means were. When this astounding news suddenly burst upon him,

he was so much touched and overwhelmed by so great a token of the old man's love that no other circumstances had much weight with him. But by-and-by he began to inquire and understand. The will was a very curious will. It began by enumerating the property which was settled and out of his power by his son's marriage settlement, and which would naturally go to his son's daughter; to other daughters mentioned as the elder and the second, but without names, which probably had been forgotten, he left each a sum of money, two thousand pounds, the residue being entirely for 'the use and benefit of my beloved young friend, Lewis Grantley, who has been a true son to my old age.'

This will, as we have said, came upon Lewis like a thunderbolt. That he himself should suddenly be turned into a rich man was wonderful enough, but that his old friend had relatives so near was still more wonderful. After the first shock of sensation, which was naturally excited by his own personal share of the revelation, the mind of the heir turned with a vague curiosity to those unknown personages. It did not for a long time occur to Lewis that he had in any way wronged them; indeed, it is very doubtful

whether it would ever have done so, had not the suggestion been thrown into his mind by the lawyer who had the management of Sir Patrick's affairs. When the agent and the heir met some time after the old man's death, the former congratulated his client significantly that 'the 'family' did not seem to have any idea of disputing the will.

'The family—disputing the will!' Lewis said, with astonishment. He was bewildered by the suggestion. The agent had come from Scotland on purpose to give the young man full information concerning his fortune.

'They might, you know, have pleaded undue influence, or even that Sir Patrick was old, and unfit to judge for himself: that he had been bullied into it, or coaxed into it.'

'Bullied into it—or coaxed into it!' Lewis echoed the words in utter amazement and dismay, with that slightest touch of foreignness in his accent which in the circumstances made the lawyer's blood boil, for he was an old family lawyer, who had managed the Murray property for generations, and his indignation was unspeakable, as may be supposed.

'Just so,' he said, coldly. 'I was consulted

on the subject; but I could only say there was no evidence—nothing that had come under my observation; so you need not fear any opposition on that point.'

'But this is very mysterious,' said Lewis. 'Why should they entertain such an opinion of me?'

He asked the question in all innocence, fixing his eyes upon the lawyer's face; and Mr. Allenerly, though so prejudiced, could not help being moved by this entirely straightforward regard.

'You see,' he said, a little abashed, 'they know nothing about you.'

'That is true enough,' said Lewis, reassured.

'They know nothing about you; all that they know is, that somebody has stolen into their grandfather's regard, and got all their money—somebody that has nothing to do with the family. That's rather a bitter pill, for they're not rich. You might be an angel from heaven, and yet as you are not a Murray the family would feel it; but you may make yourself easy on the subject. There will be no opposition.'

The insinuation and the re-assurance were alike astonishing to Lewis.

'If there is any ground on which to oppose

it, I should wish that there should be opposition. I did not want Sir Patrick's money. I never thought of it—never knew he had any.'

'You couldn't suppose,' said Mr. Allenerly, with some disdain, 'that all this was kept up on nothing?'

They were in Sir Patrick's rooms, where the young man had remained.

'That is true. No, surely it could not be kept up without money—and there was plenty of money—of course, I must have been aware of that; but I never thought of it—not for myself.'

The lawyer was very prejudiced and extremely unwilling to allow himself to say anything, but after a little hesitation he burst forth, as if the confession had been forced from him, 'I believe that.'

'Then why should they think so badly of me?' Lewis said.

He did not make any rash proposal to give up the property, as perhaps a hot-headed young Englishman might have done. People who have been brought up abroad have more respect for money in itself than we have. If they do not seek after it so enterprisingly, neither do they separate themselves from it so lightly.

There was no indignant flash of a proposal to undo Sir Patrick's will, and prove his disinterestedness beyond a question, in what Lewis said. That would have been foreign to all the habits of his mind. But he grew very grave from that time forth, a mood which suited well enough with his mourning. An intention formed itself in his mind almost immediately, which he did not at once carry out for a number of petty reasons each entirely unimportant in itself, but mounting up together into a certain reasonableness. It was not his grief, for he was young and his patron old, and the natural tears were wiped soon; nor the necessity of settling all his foreign affairs, getting rid of the house, selling or storing up the furniture and pictures, providing for the servants; but there were a number of other small things, including an illness which very naturally followed his long devotion to a sick old man.

At last, however, but not till Sir Patrick had been dead nearly a year, he set off for Scotland to carry out his intention. He was not seduced to London on the way, or to make any acquaintance with the wonders of England. London, to be sure, was growing empty and the season near

its end. He came direct from one of the Dutch ports to Leith, and without any pause proceeded to the town which was the nearest, so far as he could make out, to Murkley. One night he had reposed himself in Edinburgh, and one in the 'George.' It was but three days now since he had crossed the sea, and here he was in Murkley, in the native place of his benefactor, on the very estate which had been his, near the house in which he was born. All this had produced a great effect upon the young man, and so did the conversation with Duncan and the new view of himself and his own conduct suggested by that worthy. Passing gusts of anger and uneasiness had crossed his mind, which were neutralized indeed by the amusing circumstances of his arrival and the novelty of the scene around. But when he had found himself alone that first evening, and the outer world shut out, it could not be denied that the usual peace of his mind was much disturbed. He no longer felt sure of himself, and that tranquil consciousness of having done and of meaning to do his best, which gave serenity to his character, failed him almost for the first time in his life. It was a painful experience to go through, but there was a satis-

faction in the thought that he was now on the spot at least, and in the way of ascertaining exactly what the state of the matter was, and how he could best amend it, or if amendment was possible.

This cheering thought and the influence of the morning restored his satisfaction in the external world, and his hopes for what was before him, and the sense of being surrounded with novel circumstances in a new country with everything to learn and to enjoy, restored his spirits. One thing gave him a momentary annoyance, which, however, ended soon in the half mischievous, boyish pleasure which he felt in the expedient he thought of to meet it. The annoyance was his sudden recollection that the name of Lewis Grantley was no doubt well known at Murkley Castle. To allow himself to be known as that detested personage would baffle him in all his intentions. The way of eluding this was a sufficiently simple one, that of dropping his own name. Accordingly he took the first step in conciliating the family by doing the thing of all others at which they were most indignant—assuming the name of Murray, as Sir Patrick had wished. Sir Patrick had expressed a wish on the subject, but it

was not mentioned in the will, nor was there any such stipulation made. And Mr. Allenerly had thought it inexpedient. Therefore it had been understood that Grantley he should continue to be. The best disguise he could assume, he felt, was to take the name which would be supposed to be the most unlikely he could hit upon, and yet to which he had a certain right. The idea of doing so amused while it annoyed him. Sir Patrick would have liked it. It would have been a pleasure to the old man; and to himself it would be a shield in this country of the Murrays where every third person to be met with bore the name. If at the same time a sense of deception and unreality crossed the young man's mind, he put it away as a piece of folly. He had nothing but a good meaning in this visit to his adversary's country, to the neighbourhood of the people whom he had wronged without knowing it, most innocently because altogether unawares.

This serious background of thought occupied his mind muoh while he lay awake in the stillness of the night. But the stillness did not continue long. The darkness was not much more than the twinkling of an eyelid, he thought,

and the birds were all awake in a multitudinous chorus, and the sun shining into his room before drowsiness overcame him. At five and twenty, however, a great deal of noise and tumult is necessary to keep sleep away from the eyes, and Lewis, when he got the tangle of his cares unloosened, soon lost consciousness of the birds. And when he woke in the morning and found himself in a new world, with everything about him novel and unfamiliar, amusement and pleasure got the upper hand with scarcely an effort. Let the countryside think what it would of him, he knew himself better, and it would go hard with him, he said to himself, if he did not conquer even the countryside.

## CHAPTER III.

'YE'LL be for the fushin', sir? Adam, that's my man, will give ye a' the information. He's fell at the saumon; and muckle need to be fell at something,' added Janet; 'for a mair fusionless man about a house doesna exist. He's no made for an innkeeper. I'm aye telling him that; but I might just as weel keep my breath for ither purposes. It never does him ony good.'

'It is all the more to your credit, Mrs. ——'

'Oh, you needna fash your head about the mistress. I've aye been Janet, and Janet I'll be to the end o' the chapter. If there had been ony pith in the man, we might, maybe, have risen like the rest of the world; for he's no ignorant, nor yet a gommeral, though ye might think sae to see him: but no pith in him—you

would call it spirit, maybe, in English. That's "the stalk o' carle-hemp in man," that Robert Burns speaks about. You'll maybe mind? Na, he's no an ill man, but there's nae carle-hemp in him. Sae I have a' upon my shoulders. And, if everything shouldna be just as you wish, it'll be real kind to name it, Mr. Murray. So you're Murray, too? there are a hantle Murrays hereabout. Ye'll be of the Athol family, or——'

'I have lived abroad all my life,' said Lewis, 'and I have been an orphan since I was very young—so that I know very little about my relations.'

He felt very self-conscious as he made this little explanation, and thought it so awkward that he must be found out, but Janet was entirely unsuspicious, and accepted it as a matter of course.

'Eh, that's an awfu' pity,' she said, sympathetically; then added, 'If ye've been abroad so lang as that, ye'll maybe have met with auld Sir Patrick about the world. That's the grandfather of our misses here—a real grand-looking auld gentleman as ever I set eyes on —but, I'm feared, sir, no sae good as he looked.

He's been aye abroad sin ever I mind, and the general and him didna gree; and he has left every penny of his siller that he could meddle with, away frae his family. It's an awfu' hard case,' Janet said.

'I have heard something of that: and I think —I have met Sir Patrick.'

'I wonder,' said Janet, 'if ye've seen the lad that did a' the mischief?—a young Frenchman or foreigner he was—that creepit into the auld gentleman's heart, and turned him against his ain flesh and blood. I wouldna have that man's conscience for a' the siller.'

'I've seen,' said Lewis, colouring in spite of himself, 'a young man—to whom Sir Patrick had been very kind—and who loved him as if he had been his father. They were like father and son for years. I don't think he knew anything about the money.'

'Eh, that's mair nor I can believe,' said Janet, shaking her head. 'What was a' that for, if he kent nothing about the money? I canna believe that.'

'Do you think foreigners, as you call them, are such *canaille*—I mean, such brutes and dogs——'

'I ken very well what canailye means,' said Janet. 'Well, I wouldna be uncharitable. There's maybe some that are mair high-minded, but the most of them, you'll allow, sir, are just for what they can get—'deed the English are maistly the same, in my opinion;—and twa-three Scots, too, for that matter,' she added, with a laugh.

'You are entirely wrong in that,' said Lewis, with some heat. 'Don't you know, in other places, it is the Scotch who are said to be so interested and greedy—always grasping at advantage, always thinking what is to pay.'

'Weel,' said Janet, 'that just shows what I'm saying, how little we ken about our neighbours. Murkley folk canna bide the Braehead, and Braehead has aye an ill word conter Murkley. That's just the way o' the world. Me that's a philosopher's wife, if I'm no philosophical mysel'——'

'Are you a philosopher's wife?' said Lewis, restored to good-humour, as she probably meant he should be, by this statement.

'Oh, sir, do you no ken that? That shows you're little acquaint with this countryside,' said Janet. 'And yonder he is, just starting for the water; and if I was a fine young gentleman

like you, instead of 'biding in the house this fine morning, I would just be aff to the water, too, with Adam. Ye'll find him a diverting companion, sir, though it's maybe no me that should say it. He has a great deal to say for himself when he is in the humour. Hi!' she said, raising her voice, and tapping loudly on the window, 'here's the gentleman coming with you, Adam.'

This way of getting him out of the house amused Lewis greatly. He did not resist it, indeed the sun was shining so brightly, yet the air was so cool and sweet, a combination little known to the stranger, that he had already felt his blood frisking in his veins. Adam was going leisurely along, with his basket slung round him, and a great machinery of rods and lines over his shoulder. He scarcely paused to let Lewis come up with him, and all he said by way of salutation was, 'Ye've nae rod,' said somewhat sulkily, Lewis thought, out of the depths of his beard and his chest. And it cannot be said that the description of Janet was very closely fulfilled. Adam was much intent upon his work. If he could be 'diverting' when he was in the humour, he was not in the humour to-day.

He led the way down to the riverside with scarcely a word, and crossing the unsheltered meadow which lay along the bank, with only a few trees on the edge, soon got within the shelter of the woods. Tay was smooth and smiling as he passed by the meadows and the village; a few yards up the stream there was a ferry, with a large boat, intended to carry horses and carriages over the water, but here, where the fisherman established himself, the placid reach ended abruptly in rapids, rushing among huge boulders, through which the water foamed and fretted, with cliffs rising high on the opposite bank, and an abundance of great trees bending over the water's edge and on the bank, and nodding from the cliff that looked like a ruined tower.

'I was about to ask you if you had much boating here,' Lewis said, with a laugh; 'but Nature seems to have stopped that.'

'You'll no boat much here,' said the philosopher, grimly, which was not a profound remark.

He came to a pause upon a green bank, a little opening between the trees opposite the great cliff which reared itself like a great fortification out of the water. The village, the bit of level meadow, the stillness and serene air

of comfort seemed to have passed away in a moment to give place to a mountain torrent, the dark water frowning and leaping against the rocks. Adam took some time to arrange all his paraphernalia, to fit his rod, and arrange his bait, during which time he did not deign to address a word to his companion, who watched him with curiosity, but, unfortunately, with a curiosity which was that of ignorance. After he had asked several questions which made this very distinct, the philosopher at last turned round upon him with a sort of slow defiance.

'You're no a fisher,' he said. 'What will have brocht ye here?'

This was to Adam the most simple and natural of questions; but it somewhat disturbed Lewis, who was conscious of intentions not perfectly straightforward. Necessity, which is the best quickener of wit, came to his aid. He bethought himself of a little sketch-book he had in his pocket, and drew that out.

'There are other things than fishing to bring one into a beautiful country,' he said.

'Oh, ay,' said Adam, 'if you're o' the airtist class—' Perhaps there was a shade of contempt in his tone. But, if so, he changed it quickly.

with a respect for his companion's feelings, which was the height of politeness. 'There's mony comes this way, but to my mind they should a' gang a wee further. We're naething in comparison with the real Highlands.'

For nearly an hour he said no more; the little click of the reel, the sweep of the water, the occasional leap of a fish, the multitudinous hum of insects were all the sounds about. Lewis seated himself on the grass, and began to justify his title of artist by beginning a sketch at once. He had a pretty amateur talent, and could accomplish without much difficulty the kind of sketch which seems to promise great things. The promise was never fulfilled, but that mattered little. The bold cliff opposite, the mass of rock half way across the stream, which at that point lashed the rapid water into fury, the deeper shadow under the bank, the blaze of light where the trees opened, and flickering intermixture of light and shade where the foliage was thicker, gave exactly the picturesque effect necessary for such a composition as amateurs love.

As he sat on the grass, sketching this unfamiliar landscape, with the silent figure by his side, manipulating his line, and the rush of the

water in his ears like a new language, Lewis could not but smile to himself at the strange revolution in his own thoughts and surroundings. His connections had been entirely urban. Old historical towers, churches, and palaces had been the shrines at which he had paid his devotions. Of Nature he knew next to nothing, and to think that his first acquaintance with her should be made on the banks of the Tay was strange indeed. The Tiber would have been more likely, that yellow stream to which its sons paid a most undeserved compliment when they hailed the noble Tay as its resemblance. But there was something in the coolness and sweetness of this still hour which moved Lewis strangely. He had been more used to the cicali in the trees than to the endless twitter of the northern woods, the perpetual concert in which 'the mavis and the merle were singing,' and to avoid the grass as perhaps full of snakes, and to fear the sun as it is feared where its fury gives sudden death. He sat in the full blaze of it now with a pleased abandonment of all precautions. It was altogether like a pleasant dream.

'Is that a house behind the cliff high up among those trees?' he said. He could not

help thinking of a similar corner of old masonry peering through the olive groves on a slope of the Apennines; but how different this was! 'And who may live there, I wonder?' he added, pausing to look sideways at his sketch, in the true artistic *pose*.

Adam was very busy at that moment; he gave a sort of oblique glance upwards from the corner of his eyes, but he was struggling with his first fish, which was far too important a crisis to be mixed up with talk, or vain answers to useless questions. It was not till he had pulled out his prize, and deposited the glistening, gasping trout upon the grass with a grunt of fatigue and satisfaction, that he took any notice of what his companion said. Lewis got up to look at it as it leaped its last in a convulsive flutter. He was no sportsman—indeed, he was so little of his race that the sight of dying was painful to him even in this uninteresting example. But he knew better than to show this.

'That's a fine ane,' said Adam—'no so big as mony, but a strong creature; he has most strained my wrist wi' his acteevity. Ye were asking what house is yon. It is old Stormont

Tower, a bit poor place, but as old as the hills themselves. You that makes pictures, did ye ever see a bonnier picture than that?'

'Is it for the value of the fish or the pleasure of catching it,' said Lewis, 'that you put a stop to its enjoyment? That's a more pleasant picture, I think,' and he pointed to the sudden gleam of a salmon leaping in the middle of the stream.

Adam cast a glance at him of mingled curiosity and disdain.

'I said ye were nae fisher the first look I got at ye,' he said. 'And ye find more pleasure in making scarts upon paper than in sport?' he added, a minute after, in a solemn tone.

'At least, the scarts on the paper do no one any harm,' said Lewis, laughing. But he acknowledged the ineffectualness of his occupation by forthwith putting away his sketch-book.

Adam saw this too with the corner of his eye, and apparently was mollified by the withdrawal of that peaceful competitor Art from the regions sacred to a stouter occupation. After a while, he spoke again,

'Sport,' he said, 'I'll no deny, is a mystery. That ye should take your pleasure in what's

pain and death to another poor creature, maybe just as good as yoursel'—it's a real funny thing when you come to think o't. I can gi'e no explanation. I've taken mony a thought on the subject mysel'. That's how we're made, I suppose—to see the thing fecht for its life, that's your pleasure, and to battle wi' 't and get the upper hand. I canna be sorry for a trout,' he said, casting a slow glance at the fish; 'it's just made for a man's dinner, and that's the short and the long of it; but a deer, now—a grand creature, carrying yon muckle horns like a king his crown, and a wheen skulking murderers lying in wait for him, letting fly when the poor beast comes up unsuspecting! I'm not a deer-stalker,' said Adam, with more simplicity than philosophy, making up

> 'For sins he was inclined to
> By d—ning those he had no mind to,'

'and I just canna bide *yon*.'

Upon which he cast his line once more, and Lewis, though he did not feel any pleasure in the sight of the last convulsions, began to watch with interest, which gradually grew into excitement, the skill with which Adam plied his trade, the cunning arts by which he beguiled a wary

old Tay trout, up to a great many things, into acceptance of the fly which dangled before his nose. The trout was experienced, but the man was too much for him. Then there ensued that struggle between the two which strained the fisherman's skill and patience to the utmost. The little drama roused the spectator out of his calm and almost repugnance. He followed it to its conclusion with almost as much real, and considerably more apparent, excitement than Adam himself, and scarcely repressed a 'hurrah!' of triumph when the prey was finally secured.

'I tell't you sae,' said Adam. 'That's just the way with man; ye canna get the pleasure without the killing o' the creature. It's a queer thing, but most things are queer. You'll have been at the college, and studied pheelosophy, nae doubt? but you'll no explain that to me; nor me, I can give no explanation, that have turned the thing o'er and o'er in my head. Life's just a long puzzle from the beginning o't to the end o't, and if you once begin to question what it means, ye'll never be done, nor ye'll never get any satisfaction,' Adam said.

Lewis did not take this bait as perhaps a young scholar, one of the Oxford men to whom

Adam was accustomed, who haunted these banks in the autumn, or still more keenly an argumentative youth from Aberdeen or St. Andrews might have done. He had known no college training, and had little reading of the graver sort, but he pleased the fisherman almost as much by his conversion to the excitement of sport to which indeed he was as little accustomed as to philosophy. The hours passed on quickly in the sweet air and sunshine, with the rhythm of the quick flowing river and the dramatic episode's of trout catching, and all the novelty and freshness of the new world which was widening out around the young man. He tried to beguile Adam to talk about matters which were still more interesting to himself, but the philosopher had not that lively interest in his fellow-creatures, at least of the human kind, which usually characterizes the village sage.

When Adam's creel was full they went back, but by a round which brought them in sight of the gate which Lewis remembered having passed through on the previous night; the turrets of the old house showed over the trees, and the young man looked at them with a quickened beating of his heart. He was strangely

simple in some matters, straightforward in his ideas as Englishmen rarely are, and the secret intention in his mind which had actuated his coming here moved all his pulses at this sudden reminder. He looked curiously at the trees which hid this dwelling-place. He did not know how to get access to it, how to carry out his intention; but there it was, the aim of his journey, the future scene of—how could he tell what? The future was all vague, but yet alight with pleasant chances, he did not even know whether to call them hopes. He was standing still gazing at the old house when he suddenly heard voices behind him, kind salutations to Adam, to which the fisherman replied with some cordiality. Lewis turned round quickly, for the voices were feminine and refined, though they had a whiff of accent to which he was as yet unaccustomed. It was a group of three ladies who had paused to speak to Adam, and were looking with interest at his fish. They were all in black dresses, standing out in the midst of the sunshine, three slim, clear-marked figures. The furthest from him was shorter than the others, and wore a veil which partially concealed her face; the two who were talking were evidently

sisters and of ripe years. They talked both together, one voice overlapping the other.

'What fine fish you have got, Adam!' 'And what a creelful! you've been lucky to-day.' 'If Janet can spare us a couple, the cook will be very thankful.' 'Dear me, that will be pleasant if Janet can spare us a couple,' they said.

After a few more questions they passed on, nodding and waving their hands. 'Come, Lilias,' they called both together, looking back to the third, who said nothing but 'Good day, Adam,' in a younger, softer voice.

Lewis stood aside to let them pass, and took off his hat. It was evidently a surprise to the ladies to see the stranger stand uncovered as they passed. They looked at him keenly, and made some half audible comments to each other. 'Who will that be now, Jean?' 'It will be some English lad for the fishing, Margaret,' Lewis heard, and laughed to himself. Though he did not know much about Scotland, he had of course picked up a Scotch novel now and then, and knew well enough that what he profanely and carelessly, in the unconscious insolence of his youth, called eccentric old ladies

were figures invariable in such productions. These no doubt were the Miss Grizzy and Miss Jacky of Murkley. The little encounter pleased him. He should no doubt make acquaintance with them and see the humours of the country at first hand. The third little figure with the blue veil scarcely attracted his eye at all; he saw her, but did not observe her. The blinding gauze hid anything that might have raised his curiosity. She was less imposing in every way, and when they both turned again with a 'Come, Lilias,' their air gave their little companion the aspect of a child. He quickened his pace to make up to Adam, who, though he seemed to plod along with slow, large steps which had no appearance of speed, yet tasked his younger companion, who was easily beguiled by any temptation of the way, to keep up with him.

'Are those village people?' Lewis said.

'Eh? What was that you were saying?'

'Are those two ladies—village people? I mean do they live hereabout?'

Adam turned slowly half round upon him. His large and somewhat hazy blue eyes uprose from between the bush of his shaggy eyebrows

and the redness of his beard, and contemplated the young man curiously.

'Yon's—the misses at the castle,' Adam said.

'The misses?' Still Lewis did not take in what was meant; he repeated the word with a smile.

'Our misses, the leddies at the castle,' said Adam, laconically.

Lewis was so profoundly astonished that he gave a cry of dismay.

'The ladies at the castle?—Miss Murray of Murkley?' he said.

'Ay,' said Adam, once more fixing him with a tranquil but somewhat severe gaze. Then after a minute's reflection, 'And wherefore no?'

Then Lewis laughed loud and long, with a mixture of excitement and derision in his astonishment: the derision was at himself, but Adam was not aware of this, and a shade of offence gradually came over as much as was visible of his face.

'You're easy pleased with a joke,' he said. 'I canna say I see it.' And went on with his long steps devouring the way.

Lewis followed after a little, perhaps slightly ashamed of his self-betrayal, although

there was no betrayal in it save to himself. As he looked round again he saw the group of ladies standing at the Murkley gate. Probably their attention had been roused by the sudden peal of his laughter, of which he now felt deeply ashamed. They were going in at the smaller gate, which the lodgekeeper stood holding open for them, but had paused apparently to look what it was that called forth the young stranger's mirth. He was so self-conscious altogether that he could scarcely believe that the occasion of his laugh must be a mystery to them, and felt ashamed of it as if they had been in the secret. His impulse was to rush up to them, to assure them that it did not matter, with an eagerness of shame and compunction which already made his face crimson. What was it that did not matter? But then he came to himself, and blushed more deeply than ever, and slunk away. He did not hear the remarks the ladies made, but divined them in his heart. What they said was brief enough, and he had indeed divined it more or less.

'What is the lad laughing at? Do you think he is so ill-bred as to be laughing at us, Jean?'

'What could he find to laugh at in us, Margaret?'

''Deed that is what I don't know. Let me look at you. There is nothing wrong about you that I can see, Jean.'

'Nor about you, Margaret. It is, maybe, Lilias and her blue veil.'

'Yes; it's odious of you,' cried the third, suddenly seizing that disguise in her hands and plucking it from her face, 'to muffle me up in this thing.'

'You will not think that, my dear, when you see how it saves your complexion. No doubt it was just the blue veil; but he must be a very ill-bred young man.'

## CHAPTER IV.

THIS was also the opinion of Janet when she heard of the encounter on the road. Her demeanour was very grave when she served her guest with his dinner, of which one of the aforesaid trout constituted an important part. She did not smile upon him as in the morning, nor expatiate upon the diverse dishes, as was her wont, but was curt and cold, putting his food upon the table with a thud of her tray which was something like a blow. Lewis, who had not been used to the mechanical attention of English servants, but to attendants who took a great deal of interest in him and what he ate, and how he liked it, felt the change at once. He was very simple in some matters, as has been said, and the sense of disapprobation

quite wounded him. He began to conciliate, as was his nature.

'This is one of Adam's trout,' he said.

'Just that; if it wasna Adam's trout, where would I get it?' said the ungracious Janet.

'That is true; and a great deal better than if it came from a shop, or had been carried for miles.'

'Shop!' cried Janet, with lively scorn. 'It's little you ken about our countryside, that's clear. Where would I get a shop if I wantit it? And wha would gang to sic a place that could have trout caller out of the water.'

'Don't be so angry,' said Lewis, with a smile. 'After all, you know, if I am so ignorant, it is my misfortune, not my fault. If I had been asked where I wanted to be born, no doubt I should have said the banks of Tay.'

'That's true,' said Janet, mollified. 'But you would do nothing o' the sort,' she added. 'You're just making your jest of me, as you did of the misses.'

'I—jest at the—misses,' said Lewis, with every demonstration of indignant innocence. 'Now, Mrs. Janet, look at me. Do you think I am capable of laughing at—anyone—especi-

ally ladies for whom I would have a still higher respect—if I knew them. I—jest! Do you think it is in me?' he said.

Janet looked at him, and shook her head.

'Sir,' she said, but with a softened tone, 'you're just a whillie whaw.'

'Now, what is a whillie whaw? I don't mind being called names,' said Lewis, 'but you must not call me a ruffian, you know. If one has no politeness, one had better die.'

'Losh me! it's no just so bad as that. I said sae to Adam. A young gentleman may have his joke, and no just be a scoundrel.'

'Did Adam think I was a scoundrel? I am sorry I made such a bad impression upon him. I thought we had become friends on the river-side.'

'Oh, sir, you're takin' me ower close to my word. I wasna meaning so bad as that; but, according to Adam, when you set eyes upon the misses, ye just burst out into a muckle guffaw: and that's no mainners—besides, it's not kind, not like what a gentleman's expected to do—in this country,' Janet added, deprecating a little. 'For onything I ken,' she added, presently, 'it may be mainners abroad.'

'It is not manners anywhere,' said Lewis, angrily. 'But Adam is a great deal too hard upon me, Mrs. Janet. I did not break into a loud—anything when I saw the ladies—why should I? I did not know who they were. But afterwards when I discovered their names—— You must sympathise with me. I had been looking for young ladies, pretty young ladies,' he said, with a laugh at the recollection. 'There is something more even that I could tell you. There had been some idea of an arrangement—of making a marriage, you understand—between a Miss Murray and a—gentleman I know;—if the friends found everything suitable.'

'Making up a marriage,' Janet echoed, with bewilderment, 'if the friends found it suitable!'

'Just so—nothing had been said about it,' said the young man, 'but there had been an idea. And when, knowing he was young, I beheld—two old ladies——'

'I dinna know what you call old,' said Janet, with a little resentment. 'If Miss Margaret's forty, that's the most she is. She's twa-three years younger than me. Ay, and so there was a marriage thought upon, though your friend

had never seen the leddy? and maybe the leddy was no in the secret neither.'

'Oh, certainly not,' Lewis cried.

'It would be for her siller,' said Janet, very gravely. 'You would do well to warn your friend, sir, that there's awfu' little siller among them; they've been wranged and robbed, as I was telling you. Not only they're auld, as ye say, but they're puir, that is to say, for leddies of their consequence. I would bid him haud away with his plans and his marriages, if I were you.'

'Oh, there was, perhaps, nothing serious in it; it was only an idea,' said Lewis, lightly. 'The trout has been excellent, Mrs. Janet. You cook them to perfection. And I hope you are no longer angry with me or think me a scoundrel, or even—the other thing.'

'Oh, ay, sir, ye're just the other thing—ye're a whillie whaw—ye speak awfu' fair and look awfu' pleasant, but I'm no sure how you're thinking a' the time. When I'm down the stairs getting the collops you'll maybe laugh and say, "That's an old fuil" to yoursel.'

'I should be an ungrateful wretch if I did,' said Lewis, 'especially as I am very anxious to

see what pleasant surprise you have prepared for me under the name of collops.'

'Ah!' said Janet, shaking her head, but relaxing in spite of herself, 'you're just a whillie whaw.'

When she was gone, however, Lewis shook his head still more gravely at himself. Was it not very imprudent of him to have said anything about that project?—and it was scarcely even a project, only an idea; and now it was ridiculous. He had been very imprudent. No doubt this woman would repeat it, and it would get into the air, and everyone would know. The question now was whether he should confine himself in future to the collops, or whether he should explain to Janet that he had meant nothing, and that his communication was confidential. He had certainly been a fool to speak at all. To tell the truth, he had never been alone in a totally new world without any outlet for his thoughts before, and his laugh had been so inevitable, and the explanation so simple. When Janet re-appeared with the collops, however, she was in haste, and nothing more was said; and by-and-by he forgot that he had said anything that it was not quite natural to say.

The presence of this young stranger at a little village inn so unimportant as the 'Murkley Arms' was a surprising event in the village, and set everybody talking. To be sure an enthusiastic fisherman like Pat Lindsay, from Perth, had been known to live there for a month at a time during the season, and to nod his head with great gusto when Janet's merits as a cook were discussed. Most people in Murkley were quite aware of Janet's merits, but the outside world, the travellers and tourists who passed, so to speak, on the other side, had no information on the subject. This was one of the points, indeed, in which it was an endless vexation to her that her husband had 'nae pith' nor spirit in him. Had the little house been furbished up and made into a fine hotel, Janet knew that she had it in her to make that hotel a success; but with a man who could neither look imposing and dignified at the head of such an establishment, nor do any of the hard work necessary, what could a woman do? She had to give up the hope of rising in the world; but, when it so happened that a guest did come, Janet's treatment of him was royal. And she felt a certain gratitude to the visitor who gave her an opportunity of showing what was in her.

'What is he here for?' she said. 'What for should he no be here, if ye please? He's here for his ain pleasure. He's from foreign parts, and it's good for him to see what the life is in a real quiet, honest place. They havena ower much of that abroad. They have your gambling-tables, and music playing morning, noon, and nicht. Eh, but they maun be sick o't! A band once in a way I say naething against, and when it's a regiment marching it's grand; but trumpets blaring and flaring like thae Germans, losh me! it would send a body out of her wits in nae time. He's come away from that, and I think he's a wise man. And though he's no fisher himself he likes to see Adam catch the trout. And he's a fine lad. He's welcome to bide as long as he likes, for me.'

This was her answer to the many questions with which at first she was plied on the subject. The minister, who was a man of very liberal mind and advanced views was soon interested in the stranger, and made acquaintance with him as he lingered about on Sunday after church looking at the monuments in the churchyard. Lewis went to church cheerfully as a sort of tribute to society, and also as the only social meeting to

which he could get admittance. He loved to be among his fellow-creatures, to see other people round him, and, unknown as he was, this was almost his only way of enjoying the pleasure. The minister, whose name was Seton, accosted him with very friendly intentions.

'You will find, I fear, a great difference in our services from those you are used to,' he said. 'I would fain hope things were a little better with us than they used to be; but we're far behind in ritual. The sister church has always held up a far different standard.'

'Which church is that?' said Lewis, with his friendly candour of mind. 'I am a very great ignoramus.'

'Ah, I suppose you are High,' said the minister, 'and don't acknowledge our orders. Of course, you cannot expect me to consent to that. The Church of England is a great institution, but apt to carry things with a high hand, and look down upon Protestant brethren.'

'Ah, yes—but I don't know anything about England,' said Lewis, still puzzled; upon which Mr. Seton made many apologies.

'I ought to have known—of course, your complexion and all that; you come from the

land of enlightenment, where everything is subservient to intellect. How glad I shall be of the opportunity to ask your advice about some passages I am in doubt about! Your fatherland is the home of biblical science.'

'I am not a German,' said Lewis, 'but I know the language well enough, and if I can be of any use——Oh, no, I am an Englishman, though I never was in England—unless I may call this England.'

'Which you certainly must not do,' said the minister; 'we've fought hard enough on that account in our day. I suppose you are here for the fishing,' he added, as everybody did, but with a little disingenuousness, for by this time all the world was aware that Lewis did not fish, nor pretend to fish, nor, indeed, do anything but what the good people of Murkley called idling his time away.

'I am no fisher,' he said—'not a sportsman at all, and not much of an artist either. I am not very good at anything. I came here because it struck my fancy.'

He laughed somewhat uneasily, because it was not true, and he was a bad deceiver; but then Mr. Seton had no reason to suppose that it

was not true, and he took it with great composure as a natural reason enough.

'It is a fine country,' he said. 'I am free to say it, for it is not my country. I am from the south myself.'

'The south!' said Lewis, deceived in his turn, and looking with a little surprise at the fine burly form and grizzled locks of the clergyman, who seemed to him of the same type as Adam, and not like anything that he realised as the south. 'Do you mean of France, or still nearer the mezzo-giorno? Oh, I know the south very well. I have been through the wildest parts of Sicily and Calabria, as well as most civilized regions.'

'I meant Dumfriesshire,' said the minister, with a blush. He felt as if he had been guilty of false pretences. 'That is south to us. You have been a great traveller, Mr. ——'

'Murray,' said Lewis, quickly.

'You are a Murray, too? Then I suppose you had ancestors in this district. That's very common; I have had people come here from all the ends of the world anxious to look at the tombstones or the parish register.'

'I shall not need to do that,' the young man said. 'The name came to me with some pro-

perty,' he added, with his usual mixture of caution and imprudence—'from my god-father,' he added, after another pause. This was so far true that it was the name by which the young dependent on his bounty had been used to call old Sir Patrick; his voice softened at the word, which he had not used for so long. 'He brought me up—he was very good to me. I have lost him, there is about a year.'

The minister felt that it was necessary to reply in his professional capacity.

'Ah,' he said, 'such losses shatter the world to us; but so long as they turn our thoughts to better things, to the land whither we must all travel——'

Lewis was not used to spiritual consolation; he gave his companion a nod of not uncheerful assent.

'He always wished me to travel,' he said. 'It has become to me a second nature. I am told that it is to the Highlands that tourists go, but otherwise this pleases me very much.'

'And you are comfortable at Adam Burnet's? He is a character—the sort of mind that we flatter ourselves is peculiarly Scotch,' said the minister. 'I hope you will gratify my wife and

me by taking your luncheon with us. A stranger is always welcome,' he continued, leading the way after Lewis had consented with a smile and bow and flourish of his hat, which made Mr. Seton smile, 'in a Scotch manse; and if you are making a long stay, Mr. Murray——'

It was thus that Lewis made his first entry into society in the village.

'You should have seen his bow, my dear,' the minister said; 'he is just awfully foreign, but a good fellow for all that, or else my skill in faces is at fault.'

This was to prepare Mrs. Seton to receive the stranger, whom, indeed, the minister brought in with a sense of an unauthorized interference in what was not his department. He was at liberty to bring an old elder, a brother minister, even a farmer of a superior description; but Mrs. Seton was particular about young men. Katie was sixteen, and 'there was never any telling,' her mother said. In the present case the risks were even greater than usual, for this young man was without an introduction, nobody to answer for him or his respectability, and a foreigner besides, which was at once more terrible and more seductive than an intruder native born.

'Your father is so imprudent,' she said to Katie. 'How can we tell who he is?'

'He looks very innocent,' said that young woman, who had seen the stranger a great many times, and found him entirely unlike her ideal. Innocent was not what Miss Katie thought a young man ought to look. She followed her mother to the early Sunday dinner, which Mr. Seton entitled lunch, without the slightest excitement, but there was already some one in the room whose presence disturbed Katie's composure more. Of the three gentlemen there assembled, Lewis was the least in height and the least impressive in appearance. The two stalwart Scotchmen, between whom he stood, with vigour in every line of their long limbs and every curl of their crisp locks, threw him into the shade. He was shorter, slighter, less of him altogether. His hair was light, and not very much of that. In all probability when he was older he would be bald, and people who depreciated Lewis were apt to say of him that he was all one colour, hair and complexion. His dress had a little of a foreign cut, or rather it was elaborately English *à la mode de Paris*, and he was not at all indifferent about his reception

here, but sincerely anxious to please and make a favourable impression, and did not in the least hesitate to show that he was so. This went against him with the party generally, but Lewis was quite unaware of that.

The other young man whom he had found there, when the minister showed him into the little drawing-room and went to report what he had done to his wife, was in reality half a head taller, and looked twice the size of Lewis. He was brown and ruddy like most of the men about, accustomed to expose himself to the weather, and to find his occupation and pleasure out of doors. He was slightly shy, but yet quite at his ease, knowing that it was his duty to talk and be friendly to the stranger, and doing his duty accordingly, though he had none of Lewis's eager desire to make himself agreeable. When the minister entered they were introduced to each other as Mr. Murray and Mr. Stormont, upon which Lewis said immediately, with a little effusive pleasure,

'Ah, I know your name very well; you must belong to the tower on the other side of the river. I attempt to sketch you almost every day.'

'Oh!' said young Stormont, and in his mind he added, 'It's an artist,' which seemed to account for the stranger at once.

'My attempts have not been very successful,' Lewis added, laughing. 'I go out with Adam when he goes to fish, and when a trout is very interesting my sketch-book falls out of my hands.'

'You can't see much of the tower from the other side,' said Stormont. 'I hope you will come and study it near at hand.'

'That I will do with great pleasure,' cried Lewis. It exhilarated him to find himself again in good company. 'You are very kind to admit me into your house,' he said, with frank gratification, to the minister. 'Mrs. Janet and her husband are very interesting; they throw a great light upon the country: but I began to long to exchange a little conversation with persons—of another class.'

'I am sure we are very glad to see you,' said Mrs. Seton. 'It must be lonely in an inn, especially if you have come out of a family. We have seen you passing, and wondered what you could find in Murkley. There is no society here. Even the tourists going out and in are a

variety when you are further north, but here we are just dropped in a corner and see nothing. Oh, yes, old Pat Lindsay who thinks of nothing but his trout. Trout are nice enough things on the table, but not as the subject of conversation. Even Mr. Stormont here is away oftener than we would like him to be.'

'Only for the shooting,' said Stormont, 'and a little while in Edinburgh in the winter, and sometimes a run up to town in the spring.'

'How much does that leave?' said the lady, playfully. 'But never mind, we cannot expect to bind a young man here. I think of the time when my own boys will grow up and want to be moving. Thanks be to Providence, Katie's a girl and will stay at home.'

Katie's eyes, which were bright and brown like the Tay, opened a little wider at this, and gave out a glance which was half laughter across the table. Lewis, looking on with great interest, felt that the glance was winged to somewhere about that part of the table where young Stormont sat, and felt a great sympathy and interest. He met her eyes with a slight smile in his, making unconscious proffer of that

sympathy, which made Katie blush from head to foot, and grow hot with indignation as well, as if she had been found out.

'Mr. Murray has been a great traveller,' said the minister, 'and, Katie, you should seize the opportunity to try how your German sounds, my dear. It is apt to be one thing on a book and another in the mouth. I made so dreadful a failure in the speaking of it myself the first time I tried to do it that I never made the attempt a second time. But I suppose one language is the same as another to you.'

'Katie speaks it very well, I believe,' said her mother; 'but, dear me, where is the use of it here? We are out of the way both of books and people, and how is a girl to keep it up? There's a great deal of nonsense about teaching children foreign languages, in my opinion. But, whisht, let me think what company we have that would suit Mr. Murray; everybody is so far off. To be sure, there is one family, but then they are all ladies—the Miss Murrays at the castle. We must not leave them out, but they would be little resource to a young man.'

'And perhaps they are not so kind, so hospitable as you,' said Lewis. 'I have already, I fear,

offended them, or if not them then their admirers. It is they who are called the Misses? Then I thought that must mean young ladies, very young. It was foolish, but I did so. And when in the road with Adam we encountered these old ladies——'

'Oh, stop, stop, not old. I cannot have them called old,' cried Mrs. Seton. 'Bless me, Miss Jean is not much more than my age.'

'And it does not matter whether they are old or young,' said Katie; 'we are all very fond of them.'

'And I,' said Lewis, putting his hand on his heart, 'respect them infinitely. I am much interested in those ladies. The oldness is nothing—it does not affect me. I wish to know them above everything. I have known their grandfather—abroad.'

'Bless me,' said Mrs. Seton; 'old Sir Patrick? This is most interesting. I never saw him; he was away before we came here. And what did you think of him? He was a tyrant, I've always heard, and a terrible egotist; thinking of nothing but his own pleasure. You know the story, I suppose, of how he left all his money away from the family; and nothing to any of them

but the old house and that great big folly of a new one. I wonder they don't pull that place down.'

'Oh, mamma, if money was to come into the family! that is what Lilias says. If some uncle they never heard of was to come from India, or somebody they had been kind to die all at once, and leave them a fortune.'

'I will not have you see so much of Lilias, if she fills your head full of nonsense,' said Mrs. Seton. 'Such folly! for they have no uncle in India, that ever I heard tell of; and people now-a-days don't make those daft-like wills—though, to be sure, Sir Patrick's an example. Did you ever see, Mr. Murray, the young man we've heard so much about?'

'The fellow that got the money,' young Stormont said.

'What kind of a being was it?' said the minister. 'Some supple foreign lad that flattered the silly old man. It has always been strange to me that there was nobody near to speak a word for justice and truth.'

'You are hard upon foreigners,' said Lewis. 'It is not their fault that they are foreign. Indeed they would not be foreign *there*, you

know, but the people of the country, and we the foreigners. I knew this fellow, as you say. He was not even foreign, he was English. The old gentleman was very fond of him, and good to him. He did not know anything about the money.'

'Ah, Mr. Murray, you'll never persuade me that. Would a young man give up years of his life to an old one without any expectations? No, no, I cannot believe that.'

'Did he give up years of his life? Oh, yes, I suppose so. No one thought of it—in that light. He loved him like his father. There was no one else to take care of him, to make him happy. I see now from the other point of view. But I do not think he meant any harm.'

This Lewis said much too seriously and anxiously for his *rôle* of spectator, but at the moment, there being no suspicion, no one remarked his nervous earnestness. He cast a sort of appealing glance round the table, with a wistful smile.

'No one,' he said, '*there*, thought any harm. He was the most astonished himself.'

'And what kind of a fellow was he,' said

Stormont, 'a gentleman, or just some cad the old man had picked up?'

At this Lewis grew red in spite of himself, then did his best to laugh, though the effort was great.

'I do not know,' he said, 'having always lived abroad, what is exactly a cad, and also what, when you come to its exact meaning, is a gentleman?'

'Oh, a gentleman—' said Mrs. Seton, 'Bless me, what a question! It is just—not to be mistaken: there is no two words about it—— No, no—describe it! how could I describe it? A gentleman! my dear Mr. Murray, you can be in no doubt about that.'

'And a cad is just a cad,' said young Stormont, 'a fellow, don't you know, that's not a gentleman—just as a hill isn't a river, and can never be.'

'As distinct as that?' said Lewis. 'It is hard upon us who have always lived abroad. It means, to be well educated and well bred——'

'And well born, Mr. Murray; you must not leave out that. Well born, above all things; there's everything in race.'

'But those whom you meet only in society,'

said Lewis, 'even on the Continent—where every man must have *ses papiers*—he does not carry them about with him. He does not pin a little *carnet* on his sleeve. You must take him on trust.'

'That is just the danger of promiscuous society,' said Mrs. Seton, briskly. 'That is what I always say to papa. It is so easy to be taken in by a fair exterior; and when you don't know who people are, and all about them, it's a serious thing,' said the lady, shaking her head, 'especially where there are young people. Oh, it is a very serious thing, Mr. Murray. I am sure I always say about ball-room acquaintances and persons of that sort, if harm comes of it, really you have nobody to blame but yourself.'

There was a pause after this, and a great sense of embarrassment. Katie looked at her mother with anxious, telegraphic communications, of which Mrs. Seton either would not or did not take any notice. Even Mr. Stormont, though not very quick, saw the dilemma. Lewis was the most self-possessed.

'I must be more grateful than ever,' he said, turning to his hostess, with that conciliatory smile which was so natural to him, 'that you

have given your hospitality so kindly to one who has no vouchers, no one to speak for him—a stranger.'

'Bless me, Mr. Murray; I hope you never thought——Dear, dear, you might be sure that was the last thing in my mind. Present company, you know, of course; and then in some cases the first look is enough,' said Mrs. Seton, with a gracious bow to her guest.

This little episode distracted the company altogether from the question propounded by Stormont about Sir Patrick Murray's heir, and during the rest of the meal Lewis exerted himself to keep away from dangerous subjects: which was a greater mental effort to him, perhaps, than any he had ever made in his life. For he was ready by nature to take everybody he met into his confidence. He had the most unbounded trust in his fellow-creatures, and he wanted to be approved, to have the sympathy of those about him. He, whose impulse it was to be always looking out of the window—how could he put up shutters, and retire into seclusion and mystery? It was the thing of all others most difficult to him. But he was quick and ready, and kept his wits about him, having

been thus put on his guard. He betrayed something else with great and simple pleasure—his own accomplishments, which were, in Mrs. Seton's opinion, many. He showed them his amateur sketch-book, which seemed the work of a great artist to these uninstructed people, and, indeed, was full of fairly brilliant dashes at scenery and catchings up of effect, which he himself was well aware were naught, but which were very attractive to the uncritical. And it was all they could do to keep him from the piano, where he sadly wanted to let them hear one or two morceaux from the last opera. Mrs. Seton had to place herself in front of the instrument with an anxiety to prevent the desecration of the Sabbath without exposing herself to the charge of narrow-mindedness, which was highly comic.

'That will be for to-morrow,' she said. 'We must not have all our good things at once. No, no, we must leave something for to-morrow. The servants, you see, have prejudices—we have to consider so many things in a manse. A clergyman's family are always talked about: and then economy's my principle, Mr. Murray; we must keep something, you know, for to-

morrow. And that just reminds me that I hope you will come in a friendly way and spend the evening—we have no parties, you know, here—but if you will just come in a friendly way: and *then* it will give us the greatest pleasure,' Mrs. Seton said, nodding her head and smiling.

Thus immediate advantage sprang from the over-boldness of his foreign ways; and when he left the manse, young Stormont, though somewhat contemptuous of a man who 'went in for' music and spoke all sorts of languages, yielded to the ingratiating ways of the stranger, and invited him half surlily to lunch with him next day at the tower, which Lewis accepted with his usual cordiality.

He went back with a sense of exhilaration to the parlour overlooking the village street, all so still in the drowsy Sunday afternoon.

'Me voici lancé,' he said to himself, with glee. He had known the excitements of society very different from that of Murkley, but he knew the true philosophy of being not only contented, but pleased, when you cannot get everything you like, with what you are lucky enough to be able to get.

## CHAPTER V.

'WE must ask just whoever there is to ask,' said Mrs. Seton. 'You see, there will be no difficulty in entertaining them, with that young man. He will play his music as long as anybody will listen to him, or I'm mistaken. Philip Stormont is coming; I had to ask him, as he was there; and you can send Johnnie over with a note to the Borrodailes, Katie, and I'll write up to the Castle myself. Then there's young Mr. Dunlop, the assistant at Braehead. He is of a better class than most of the young men: and the factor—but there's three girls there, which is a terrible band of women. If you were very good, and all things went well, and there were two or three couples, without disturbing other folk, and papa had no objection——'

'We might end off with a dance—that was what I expected,' cried Katie, clapping her hands. 'I'll put on my hat and run up to the Castle to save you writing.'

'Stop, stop, you hasty thing!—on a Sabbath afternoon to give an invitation! No, no, I cannot allow that. Sit down and write the notes, and you can date them the 15th' (which was next morning), 'and see that Johnnie is ready to ride by seven o'clock at the latest. But I would not let you go to the Castle in any case, even if it had not been Sunday, for most likely they would not bring Lilias. I will just ask Miss Margaret and Miss Jean to their tea. If there was a word of dancing, there would be no chance; they would just say, "She's not *out*."'

'And neither am I out,' cried Katie, with impatience.

'You—you're just nobody, my dear; there will be no grand ceremony, no Court train and feathers, for you, a simple minister's daughter. Not but what I might be presented, and you too, if I liked, and it was worth the expense,' said Mrs. Seton. 'Lady Lorraine would do it in a moment; but you are not an heiress, Katie. Still I

think they're over-particular—oh, yes, certainly they are over-particular; the poor thing will miss all the little amusement that's going. But perhaps they'll bring her, if they think they are only asked to their tea.'

'The only thing I don't like in them,' cried Katie, 'is tying Lilias up in that blue veil, and not letting her go to parties—that's odious! But for all the rest, that Mr. Murray—that person you are so fond of——'

'Me! fond of him! I think he will be an acquisition,' said Mrs. Seton, calmly; 'and now that I've been driven into asking him for the evening we may as well make the best of it. Yes, my dear, I was driven into it. You wouldn't have me be impolite? And you know, if the piano had been heard going at three o'clock on a Sunday afternoon, where would your character have been, Robert? I would not say but they would have had you up before the presbytery. I have to think of you as well as of myself. Oh, well, I don't just say that I would have liked it much myself. Opera music on a Sunday is a step further than I would like to go, though I hope I'm not narrow-minded; so I was just obliged to ask him for a week night. And if you will

make allowance for the difference of foreign manners I cannot but think that he looks a gentleman. Yes—yes, he looks a gentleman—and it is not as if he was going to settle here, when, of course, we would need to know a great deal more about him; but you must take something on trust in the way of society, and if he can play so well, and all that——'

'My dear, you are always blaming me for going too far, but yet you are the one that goes the farthest,' the minister said.

'Toots,' replied his wife, good-humouredly, 'you're just an old croaker. Did any harm ever come of it? Did I ever go farther than was justified? I think, though I don't wish to seem vain, that I have just an instinct for things of that sort.'

This was, indeed, the conviction of the neighbourhood in general, which profited by the impromptu parties which the minister's wife was so clever in getting up. They were frequent enough to be reckoned upon by the people within reach; her own explanation of them was quite true and scarcely flattered.

'We cannot do anything great,' she said, 'we

have no room for it. I couldn't give a regular dance like you. In the first place it would put Mr. Seton out, for, though you would not think so, there is nobody more nervous or that wants more care taken of him, not to disturb his studies: and in the second place we have no room for it. No, no, you're all very kind making allowances, but we've no room for it. And then Katie's but a child; she is not out. Oh, I don't make a fuss of her not being out like Miss Jean and Miss Margaret, they have some reason, you know, to be particular; but to make such a phrase about a minister's daughter would be perfectly ridiculous. Yes, yes, when she's eighteen I'll take her to the Hunt Ball, and there will be an end of it. But at present she is just in the school-room, you know. A little turn of a waltz just by accident, when I have asked a few friends to tea, that counts for nothing, and that is all I ever pretend to give.' All this was so well known that there was no longer any need for saying it, though Mrs. Seton from habit continued to say it pretty often, as was her way.

But the preparations made were almost as careful as if it had not been impromptu. The furniture was deftly pushed, and edged, and

sided off to be as little in the way as possible. The piano was drawn into the corner which, after much experiment, had been settled to be the best; there was unusual sweeping oft repeated to clear the room of dust. Flowers were gathered in the most prodigal profusion. The manse garden was old-fashioned, and well sheltered, nestling under a high and sunny wall. The June fulness of roses had begun, and all sorts of sweet smelling, old-fashioned flowers filled the borders.

'Oh, yes,' Mrs. Seton said, 'we must just be content with what we can get. My poverty, but not my will, consents, as Shakspere says. No doubt but I would have a fine show of pelargoniums, or Tom Thumbs, and a border of lobelias, and the centre calceolaria, if I could. That is all the fashion now. No, no, I don't make any grievance of it. I just content myself with what I've got—old larkspurs and rockets, and so forth, that have been there since my mother-in-law's time; but they're just good enough, when you can't get better,' this true philosopher said. She had her other preparations made in the same spirit. 'A cold ham at the bottom of the table, and two or three

chickens at the top, and as much salad as they can set their faces to, and curds and cream, which the young ones are all very fond of, and stewed gooseberries, and anything else that may be in the garden, that is all the phrase I make,' said Mrs. Seton, who was sufficiently Scotch to employ a French word now and then without knowing it; but would have resented the imputation. Katie had her little white frock, which was as simple as a child's, but very dainty and neat for all that, laid out upon her little white bed, with a rose for her belt and a rose for her hair, fresh gathered from the bushes, and smelling sweet as summer. Tea was set out in the dining-room, where afterwards the cold ham and chickens were to take the place now occupied by scones of kinds innumerable, cookies, and jams, and shortbread, interspersed with pretty bouquets of flowers. It was much prettier than dinner, without the heavy fumes which spoil that meal for a summer and daylight performance. But we must not jump at once into the heart of an entertainment which cost so much pains and care.

Mrs. Seton's note was delivered early at the Castle next morning. Truth compels us to admit

that it was written on Sunday night; but it was dated Monday morning, for why should anyone's feelings be hurt even by an appearance of disrespect for the Sabbath day. ('There is none meant,' the minister's wife said, who had done all her duties thoroughly, taught her Sabbath class, and heard her children their lessons, and listened devoutly to two sermons before she turned to this less sacred duty.)

'I am asking one or two friends to tea,' she wrote, 'and I hope you will come. A gentleman will be with us who is a great performer on the piano.' It was in this way that the more frivolous intention was veiled. But, unfortunately, as is the case with well known persons in general, Mrs. Seton's friends judged the past by the present, and were aware of the risks they would run.

'It will be one of her usual affairs,' said Miss Margaret, with a glance of intelligence and warning to her sister.

'Just that, Margaret, I should suppose,' said Miss Jean.

'Then it will not be worth while for Lilias to take the trouble of dressing herself, Jean—a few old ladies invited to their tea.'

'That was what I was going to say, Margaret. I would not fash to go, if I was Lilias. She can have Katie here to-morrow.'

'Sisters!' cried Lilias, springing up before them, 'you said that last time, and there was a dance. It is very hard upon me, if I am never to have a dance—never till I am as old as you.'

The two ladies were seated in two chairs, both large, with high backs and capacious arms, covered with faded velvet, and with each a footstool almost as large as the chair. They were on either side of the window, as they might have been, in winter, on either side of a fire. They wore black dresses, old and dim, but made of rich silk, which was still good, though they had got ever so many years' wear out of it, and small lace caps upon their heads. Miss Jean was fair, and Miss Margaret's brown locks had come to resemble her sister's by dint of growing grey. They had blue eyes, large and clear, so clear as almost to be cold; and good, if somewhat large, features, and resembled each other in the delicacy of their complexions in which there was the tone of health, with scarcely any colour. Between them, on a small, very low

seat, not sitting with any dignity, but plumped down like a child, was the third, the heroine of the veil, whose envelope had disguised her so completely that even the lively mind of Lewis had not been roused to any curiosity about her. She had jumped up when she made that observation, and now flung herself down again with a kind of despairing abandon. She looked eighteen at the utmost, a small, slight creature, not like the other ladies in a single feature, at any time; and now, with her brow puckered, the corners of her mouth drooping, her eyes wet, more unlike them, in her young excitement and distress than ever.

'Now, Lilias, don't be unreasonable, my dear. If it's a dance, it stands to reason you cannot go; but what reason have you to suppose it is a dance? none whatever. "I am asking one or two friends to tea." Is that like dancing? She would not ask Jean and me, I suppose, if that was what she meant. We are going to hear a gentleman who is a great performer on the piano. It appears to me that will be rather a dreary style of entertainment, Jean; and I am by no means certain that I will go.'

'Well, Margaret,' said Jean, 'having always

been the musical one of the family, it's an inducement to me; but Lilias, poor thing, would not care for it. Besides, I have always been of the opinion that we must not make her cheap, taking her to all the little tea-parties.'

'Oh, how can you talk such nonsense, when you never take me to one, never to one! and me close upon eighteen,' the girl cried. 'Katie goes to them all, and knows everybody, and sees whatever is going on; but I must do nothing but practise and read, practise and read, till I'm sick of everything. I never have any pleasure, nor diversion, nor novelty, nor anything at all, and Katie——'

'Katie! Katie is nothing but the minister's daughter, with no expectations, nor future before her. If she marries a minister like her father, she will do all that can be expected from her. How can you speak of Katie? Jean and me,' said Miss Margaret, 'have just devoted ourselves to you from your cradle.'

'Not quite from her cradle, Margaret, for we were then young ourselves, and her mother, poor thing——'

'Well, well, I did not intend to be taken to the letter,' said Miss Margaret, impatiently.

'Since ever you have been in our hands—and that is many years back—we have been more like aunts than sisters to you. We have given up all projects of our own. A woman of forty, which is my age, is not beyond thinking of herself in most cases.'

'And, reason good, still less,' said Miss Jean, 'a woman of eight-and-thirty.'

'So little a difference as two years cannot be said to count; but all our hopes we have put upon you, Lilias. We might have been jealous of you, seeing what your position is, and what ours is; we would have had great cause. But, on the contrary, we have put all our pride upon you, and thought of nothing but what was the best for you, and pinched ourselves to get masters and means of improvement, and taken houses in Edinburgh winter after winter—'

'Not to speak,' said Miss Jean, 'of the great things Margaret has planned, when the time comes, which was not done either for her or me.'

'I know you are very kind,' said Lilias, drying her eyes.

'My dear,' said Miss Margaret, 'a season in London, and you presented to the Queen, and

all the old family friends rallying round you—would I think of a bit little country party with a prospect before me like that?'

At this Lilias looked up with her eyes shining through the wetness that still hung upon her eyelashes.

'It is very, very nice to think of, I don't deny. Oh, and awfully, awfully kind of you to think of it.'

(Let it be said here in a parenthesis that this 'awfully, awfully,' on the lips of Lilias was not slang, but Scotch.)

'I think it *is* rather good of us. It was never done, as she says, for either Jean or me.'

'I doubt if it would have made any difference,' said Miss Jean. 'What is to be will be; and making a curtsey to the Queen—unless one could get to be acquainted with Her Majesty, which would be a great honour and pleasure—'

'It just makes all the difference,' said Miss Margaret, who was more dogmatic; 'it just puts the stamp upon a lady. If you're travelling it opens the doors of foreign courts, if you stay at home—well, there is always the Drawing-room to go to.'

'And can you go whenever you like, after

you have been once introduced?' Lilias added, with a gleam of eagerness.

'Surely, my dear; you send in your name, and you put on your court dress.'

'That will be very nice,' said the girl. Her bosom swelled with a sigh of pleasure. 'For of course the finest company must be always there, and you will hear all the talk that is going on, and see everybody—ambassadors and princes, when they come on visits. Of course you would not be of much importance among so many grand people, just like the "ladies, &c.," in Shakespeare. They say nothing themselves, but sometimes the Queen will beckon to them and send them a message, or make them hold her fan, or bring her a book; but you hear all the conversation and see everybody.'

'I am afraid,' said Miss Jean, who had been watching an opportunity to break in, 'you are thinking of maids-of-honour and people in office. Drawing-rooms——' but here she caught her sister's eye and broke off.

'Maids-of-honour are of course the foremost,' said Miss Margaret. 'I don't see, for my part, why Lilias should not stand as good a chance as any. Her father was a distinguished soldier,

and her grandfather, though he has not behaved well to us, was a man that was very well known, and had a great deal of influence. And the Queen is very feeling. Why she might not be a maid-of-honour, as well as any other young lady, I am at a loss to see.'

Lilias jumped to her feet again, this time in a glow of pride and ambitious hope.

'Me!' she said (once more not for want of grammar, but for stress of Scotch). Miss Jean, scarcely less excited, put down her knitting and softly clapped her thin hands.

'That is a good idea; there is no one like Margaret for ideas,' she said.

'I see no reason why it should not be. She has the birth, and she would have good interest. She has just got to let herself be trained in the manners and the ways that are conformable. Silly lassie! but she would rather go to a little tea-party in the country.'

'No, no, no!' cried the girl, making a spring towards her, and throwing her arms round the speaker's neck. 'You don't know me yet, for I *am* ambitious; I should like to raise the house out of the dust, as you say—I, the last one, the end of all. That would be worth living for!'

she cried, with a glow of generous ardour in her eyes.

But when Lilias watched her sisters walking away, with their maid behind them carrying their shoes across the park to the little gate and green lane which led by a back way to the manse, it was scarcely possible that her heart should not sink within her. Another of those lingering, endless evenings, hour after hour of silvery lightness after the day was over, like a strange, unhopeful morning, yet so cool and sweet, lingered out moment by moment over this young creature alone. She had "her book" which, meaning literature in the abstract, was constantly recommended to her by the other ladies; and she had her sketch-book, and her needlework. Miss Margaret was wont to express absolute consternation that, with so many things to amuse her, a girl should ever feel dull. But this poor little girl, though surrounded by all these, did feel dull and very lonely. To go to Drawing-rooms, which Lilias innocently took to mean the inner circle of the court, and to be a maid-of-honour was a prospect which took away her breath. With that before her it would indeed be wonderful if she could not bear up and sub-

mit to being dull and lonely as every girl, her sisters told her, had to do before she came out; but, after she had repeated this to herself half a dozen times, the impression on her mind grew faint, the possible maid-of-honour, the gorgeous imagination of a Drawing-room floated away; they were so far away at the best, so uncertain, while it was very certain that she was lonely to-night, and that other people of her age were enjoying themselves very much. Lilias' thoughts ended, as was very natural, in a fit of crying, after which she rose up a little better, and, the new box from the library happening by good fortune to arrive at that moment, got out a new novel, which it was a small excitement to be able to begin at her own will before her sisters had decided which was, and which was not good for her, and in that happiness forgot her trouble, as she had so often done before.

'Did you really mean yon, Margaret?' Miss Jean said to her sister, as she walked along towards the manse.

'Do you think I ever say out like that anything I don't mean, Jean? I might humour the child's fancies, and let her think the drawing-rooms were real society, like what she reads;

but the other, to be sure I meant it—wherefore not?—the last of our family, her father's daughter, and a girl with beauty. We must always recollect that. You and I were good-looking enough in our day; you are sometimes very good-looking yet——'

'That's your kind heart, Margaret.'

'What has my kind heart to do with it? But Lilias has more than we ever had—she has beauty, you know. Something should be made of that. It should not just run away into the dust like our good looks, and be of profit or pleasure to nobody. I struck out the idea,' said Miss Margaret, with a little pride, 'on the spot, it is true; it came to me, and I did not shut my mind to it; but it's full of reason, when you come to think of it. I see a great many reasons for it, but none against it. They have a sort of a little income—just something for their clothes. They need not be extravagant in clothes, for Her Majesty takes little pleasure in vanity and dressing; and then they have honourable to their name. The Honourable Lilias Murray—it would sound very well; and then in the service of the Queen. Don't go too far forward, Jean; but it is a thing

to think of, to keep her heart up with. The little thing is very high-spirited when you take her the right way.'

'My heart smote me to come away and leave her, Margaret.'

'Why should your heart smite you? Would you like her to be talked about as the belle of a manse parlour, and perhaps worse than that—who can tell, at her age? She might see some long-legged fellow that would take her fancy—a factor's son, or an assistant minister, or even Philip Stormont, who is not a match for a Murray.'

'Say no more, Margaret. I am quite of your opinion.'

'And that is a great comfort to me, Jean. We can do things together that we could never do separate. Please God she shall have her day; she shall shine at the Queen's court, and marry nobly, and, if the family must be extinguished as seems likely, we'll be extinguished with *éclat*, my dear, not just wither out solitary like you and me.'

It was an ambition, after its sort, of a not unworthy kind. The two sisters, with scarfs

thrown over their caps, and their maid following at a few paces' distance, on their way to their tea-party, stepped out with a certain elation in their tread, like two figures in a procession, holding their heads high. They had each had experiences, no doubt, of their own, and neither of them had expected that their family should wither out solitary in their persons. But here they had a new life in their hands, a new hope. Many fathers and mothers have had the same thought—to secure that in the persons of their children which they had never been able to attain themselves, to raise the new generation on their shoulders, making themselves a pedestal for the future greatness. Is it selfishness disguised, the rapacity of disappointment? or is it love the purest, love unconquerable? Miss Margaret and Miss Jean never asked themselves this question. They were not in the habit of examining themselves except as to their religious duty. But they reached the manse with a little thrill of excitement about them, and a sort of exultation in their minds. The windows were all open, and a hum of many voices reached them as they

crossed the smooth-shaven lawn. Margaret gave Jean a look.

'Was it not a good thing we left her at home?' they both cried.

## CHAPTER VI.

LEWIS came away from the manse on the Sunday afternoon with a great many new thoughts stirring in his mind. His heart was made sore by the perpetual condemnation of himself which he heard on every hand; from Duncan of the dog-cart to the company at the manse, no one could believe that old Sir Patrick's adopted son was anything but a villain, a designing, mercenary adventurer, who had flattered and beguiled the old man into making provision for him at the expense of his family. It had never entered into the thoughts of these good people that they might be wrong, that their verdict might be unjust; they were as sure of it as if they had come to this decision upon the plainest and most conclusive evidence.

Lewis knew very well that it was not so, but still he was a little cowed by the reiteration. It is terrible to appear in this light to so many, even when you have the strongest internal conviction that you are right and they wrong; after a while it comes to have a certain effect upon a man's own spirit; the right which he was so unhesitatingly sure of becomes confused and dim to him. He begins even to wonder whether it is possible that he might have had an evil scheme in his head without knowing it. Lewis had not got so far as this, but he was troubled and depressed. He could not sit still in the parlour overlooking the village. It was so quiet. He longed to see somebody moving about. If there had been a band playing somewhere, and the people walking about, even in that promenade up and down which gets so dreary when it is an imperious habit, at all events that would have been more cheerful for a looker-on. But the dead stillness oppressed him. And there were no resources inside—no books, even if he had cared much for books, no piano, nothing to do but think, which is generally a troublesome and so often an unprofitable occupation. After a while he ceased to be able to put up with it at

all, and strolled out to the water-side, where he so often sat and watched Adam fishing.

The trout had a peaceful time on Sunday. The river lay as still as if it had flowed through a land unexplored. Now and then a fish would flash from the water at its ease, and sink to its pool again without anxiety. Did they know it was Sunday, Lewis wondered? It went a long way to reconcile him to the unbroken quiet which, after all, had something wonderful and beautiful in it. The cows were lying down in the meadows, their great red-brown sides rising out of the green grass and daisies with a peaceful warmth. Neither up nor down the water did he see a single living soul. The stillness moved him as he had sometimes been moved in a cathedral when all the worshippers had gone away. It was the sort of moment and the sort of place, Lewis felt, to say your prayers. He had not felt so in the morning at church. There he had gone for the sake of society. Here all was sacred and still, with something unseen giving meaning to all that was visible. He was like a child in the readiness of his emotions. He took off his hat and even said a prayer or two such as he could re-

member, and afterwards was silent, thinking, with a little awe upon him, in which the idea of God, a majestic old man like the Padre Eterno of many a picture, blended somehow with the idea of his personal benefactor, his friend who had been so good to him, and who also was old and majestic, a vision full of tenderness to his grateful heart.

After a while the ferryman came out from his cottage up the water with his two little children, and there was a far-away babble of their little voices in the air which, though very sweet and innocent, broke the spell. And then Lewis put on his hat, and began to think of his more particular affairs. This moment of solemn calm had soothed the painfulness of his sense of being unjustly treated. He began to comfort himself with the thought of being by-and-by better understood. When they knew that this adventurer, this schemer was no other than himself they would change their minds, he thought. He had never been misconstrued, but always liked and made much of wherever he had gone, and he saw no reason why now, without any cause for it, all at once his luck should change.

There were other questions, however, which

had been called up by his sudden introduction to society in Murkley. He thought of the little party round the manse dinner-table with pleasure, thinking on the whole that perhaps that was better than the more limited hospitality of a curé who had nobody to sit at the head of his table, and only himself to provide all the entertainment. Lewis was not sure of himself whether he was a Catholic or a Protestant: he was very latitudinarian. He thought, if the truth must be told, that both were best, for he liked the curé too, and was more familiar with that form of clerical development than with the comfortable minister surrounded by his children. He did not know the English clergyman at all, which made a sad vacancy in his experiences. But no curé ever spoke of the necessity of being a gentleman, or ignored all other classes, as the minister's wife did. Was there no other class in England? To be sure *gentilhomme* meant something different; but there certainly were a great number of people 'abroad' who were not *gentilhommes*, and yet were not nobody. This idea puzzled Lewis much. He asked himself was he a gentleman, with a smile, yet a half doubt. His old home, when he cast his mind back so far, was a

very homely one; his father had been the Vice-Consul's clerk, he himself had been now and then employed about the office. His mother had performed a great many of the domestic operations with her own hands; he had seen her making the coffee in the morning, sometimes even cooking the dinner, doing up the linen in a way, he fondly thought, that he never saw it now. They were much respected, but they were poor. To bury them even required a subscription from the community. The uncle who had written to him, and who had been willing to receive him, wrote like a shopkeeper. He remembered the aspect and superscription of his letter as if he had received it yesterday. If he got such a letter now, he would unhesitatingly conclude it to be a bill.

Was he then a gentleman at all? Of course Sir Patrick was so—but then Sir Patrick could not confer this nobility, or whatever it was, upon him. This thought puzzled Lewis greatly. It did not distress, but rather amused him; for, with all the associations and friends of the last eight or nine years, by far the most important of his life, it was impossible for him to imagine that he was not good enough to associate with the

good people at Murkley. He considered the question altogether as an abstract one, a matter of curiosity; but it was a question to consider. Then as to education, Lewis was aware that in this point, too, he failed. He had gleaned enough from the conversation of English visitors to know that a good education meant an education at an English university. No other kind of training counted. He had heard this from Sir Patrick himself satirically; for neither had Sir Patrick been 'a university man.' So once more Lewis felt himself out of the field altogether. Neither by birth nor education: there remained one thing, money. This he had; but was this enough to claim the position of a gentleman upon? and then they all thought the money was ill-gotten, as good as stolen from the giver's descendants. Altogether, Lewis felt that, if it should be necessary for him to give up, metaphorically, 'ses papiers' to enter into the question of his own birth, education, and fortune, things would go very hard with him in this little place. When he came to this conclusion he laughed; for it seemed very amusing that he, who had lived with ambassadors and knew his way about

many a palace, should be found not good enough for the society of the minister and the minister's wife in Murkley. It did not even occur to him that, amusing as it was, it might come some time to a serious question enough. In the meantime, it tickled his imagination greatly. Perhaps no one ever sees the ludicrous side of a privilege so completely as the man who is wanting in the qualifications to possess it. Lewis, with his non-experience, amused himself a good deal with that question about gentlemen. *Gentilhomme* was far more easy to understand; but this mysterious word, which the English used so constantly, which they tried to build upon one foundation after another, but which sometimes did not seem to require any foundation at all, what was the meaning of it? and how was it to be defined? Young Mr. Stormont of the Tower which pushed out that angle of old masonry on the cliff opposite, had every qualification necessary, 'But not I,' Lewis said, and laughed to himself. The son of a poor clerk and a nursery governess, the nephew of a linendraper—but this he was not aware of —with no education to speak of, no belongings, no settled place or position, or friends to an-

swer for him! Decidedly, if Mrs. Seton had known all this, she would have closed her door most rigidly upon him. All this amused him very much to think of as he got up from the grass, and took his way back to the 'Murkley Arms.'

By this time the world had begun to wake a little. The Sabbath seriousness had relaxed. A few groups were standing about the road in Sunday attire. The women had come out to the doors; the children were playing discreetly, but now and then rising into louder riot, which the nearest bystander rebuked with a 'Whisht, bairns! mind it's the Sabbath day.' Notwithstanding this apparent severity, there was a good deal of quiet pleasure diffused in the air. The softness of this pause in the working-day tenor of existence pervaded everything, and at the same time the duration of the unusual stillness and sense of monotony it brought, made the good people think with pleasure of the toil to be resumed to-morrow. Adam was standing in an attitude very unusual to him, leaning against his doorpost, when Lewis came up, and Janet, in her best gown, smoothing down a fresh white muslin apron, with many

frills and decorations, stood by his side. They were not an uncomely couple. He, though concealed under the veil of his beard all but his blue-grey eyes and well-formed nose, had a head of great rustic dignity and force surmounting his six feet of somewhat languid length; for Adam had 'nae pith,' as his wife said, and, but for his great gift at 'the fushin',' would have been a somewhat useless personage. She was not, to all appearance, of so elevated a type. Her face was round, and her nose turned up, and she was forty-five. The roundness natural to that mature age had taken all the charm from her trim figure, but still it was trim: a little vibration of activity, as if the machinery was all in such thorough order that the slightest touch would set it in motion, was in her: and Janet's smiling countenance was all alive, ready to hear and see everything, and give forth opinions, as many as might be desired.

'It's been another bonnie day,' she said. 'Ye'll no tell us now, sir, that we've nae fine weather on Tayside.'

'I hope I never could have been so unmannerly,' Lewis said.

'Na, you never said it, but I saw it in your eye—folk from the south are a' of that opinion, but it's just lees. I hear there is mair fog and mist in London town in a single winter than will come our way in a dizzen years.'

'You must be very glad Sunday is over,' said Lewis, with a boldness that took away Janet's breath.

'Sir!' she cried, scandalised; then after a pause of consideration: 'ye're taking your fun out of us. Them that are tired of the Sabbath day, Mr. Murray, how are they to bide Heaven, if they win to it at the hinder end?'

'Hold your tongue, Janet. We ken little enough about heaven,' said Adam, who was in the humour to talk. 'Whiles an unconsidered question like this young gentleman's will just let loose a thocht. I've been thinking lang that ae use o' the Sabbath is just maybe to make us feel that wark is the most entertaining in the lang run. There is nae time,' he continued, with dignity, 'that I think o' my occupation with mair pleasure than just about this hour on the Sabbath night.'

'I wouldna say but you're a grand authority,' said his wife, satirically, 'such hard work as yours

is! Sunday or Saturday a woman's work is never done. I havena the time to weary, for my part. There's Mr. Murray's dinner to be seen to this very blessed minute: but you that makes your day's darg out o' what the gentlemen do for pleesure——'

'Who are the gentlemen, Mrs. Janet?' asked Lewis, with all his late speculations in his mind.

'She's speaking o' gentlemen in the abstract,' said Adam, 'and no a high view of them; them that have plenty of siller and nothing to do.'

'Well,' said Janet, 'what would ye have mair? That's just about your ain description, Adam, my man; but I was not meaning them that leave a woman at hame to work for them. There's different sorts, sir, ye'll understand; there's the real gentlemen that have the land: and such as have their fortunes ready made for them are no far behind: and then there is them that can take their leisure when they please and have a' they wish for: but the grand, grand thing of a' is just what every fool kens—them that have no occasion to work for their living; ye can never deceive yourself in that,' Janet said.

'So,' said Lewis, 'for it is information I want;

one who works for his living is not a gentleman.'

Janet looked up somewhat startled.

'I'm far from saying that, sir,' she said.

'Keep her to it, Mr. Murray; ye'll get her to maintain just the opposite before you've done with her. That's women's way. There's naething they're so fond o' as a grand, broad assumption, and then. when they see a' it involves, they will just shift and shuffle and abandon their poseetion. I'm well acquaint with a' that. The true gentleman ye'll bring her to say is him that works the hardest and brings in the most siller, and is never free of his business from morning till night.'

'And well might I say it,' cried Janet, 'and guid reason I would have after a' that's come and gone. It's just that, sir. The man that does the best work, him that leaves naething but what is in her share to his wife, and lays up something for his bairns, and pays his debt of every kind baith to them that are obliged to him, and them that he's obliged to, and can haud up his head before ony man on earth, and no feared even for his Maker but in the way of reverence and his duty. Weel! that's an honest man at heart, if he's no a gentleman, and a better

thing than a gentleman, if it was my last word. But, losh me! if I stand havering here,' cried Janet, abandoning her peroration and her excitement together, 'you'll get no dinner, sir, the day.'

'What do you ca' that thing the auld heathens fired as they fled, sir?' said Adam, as Janet disappeared. 'A Parthian arrow? Yon's just it. It's naething to the argument, but it has its effect. It doesna convince your mind, but it makes a kind of end of your debating. It's just a curious question enough what makes a gentleman. I canna tell ye, for my part. I'm maybe mair worth in many ways than a lad like you, not meaning any offence. I've come through mair, I have pondered mair—but pit me in your claes and you in mine, and it would be you that would be the gentleman still. I canna faddom it: but that's no remarkable, for there are few things I can faddom on this earth. The mair I ponder, the less I come to ony end.'

'All the philosophers are the same,' said Lewis. 'You are not singular, my friend Adam. But how do you know I am a gentleman, come? I might be nothing of the sort. You never saw me till ten days ago. It is not the clothes,

you admit, and you feel that you are a better man than I. Then why do you take it for granted that I am a gentleman? You have no evidence.'

'Maister Murray,' said Adam, somewhat grimly, 'evidence has little, awfu' little to do with it. Maybe you're one of them that thinks with Locke there are nae innate ideas? But I'm of the Scotch school, sir; I'm no demanding daata daata for ever, like your Baconian lads. Let us be, and we'll come down to your facks, and fit them a' in to a miracle. It's just a brutal method, in my opinion, to demand the facks first, and syne account for them and explain them a' away.'

'You are abandoning the point more than your wife did,' cried Lewis. 'Come! how do you know?'

'I know naething about it,' said Adam, turning away. 'I'll argue my ain gait or I'll no argue at all. Your personal questions are naething to a true philosopher. This I'll tell ye, if a man canna be kent for a gentleman without proving it, it's my opinion he's nae gentleman ava. And I'm for a turn before the night closes in,' said Adam, suddenly.

Lewis was left in the lurch, standing alone by the open door. He went in after a little pause. He was pleased by what Adam said, though he had not been at all distressed before by the doubts which he had set forth before himself as to his own right to this title. He had laughed at his own argument then, and he laughed now, but nevertheless he was pleased. It was flattering, though it was so gruffly said.

Next morning rose still fair and bright, though Adam declared it would be the last day of the fine weather. Lewis was delighted to think of his two engagements. He did not care for his own exclusive society. He set out for Stormont when the sun was high, at an hour which all the experience of his previous life proved to him to be an impossible one to walk in, and found it only bright and genial with all the breadth and hush of noon, but without any of its oppressive qualities. He went across the river in the big ferry-boat, along with a farmer's shandry-dan. He recollected to have crossed a river so near Paestum in the wildest wastes of Italy, with brigands about, and dangers. The contrast was so strange that he laughed in spite of himself.

'It's perhaps not very well-bred,' said the farmer's wife, who sat in state in her vehicle, holding her horse warily in hand though he was used to it, 'but no doubt it's very funny to see me up here.'

'Not funny at all, madam,' said Lewis, taking off his hat; 'but it reminded me of a ferry abroad, where we were afraid of the brigands, and every man you met carried a gun.'

'Bless me! I suppose, sir, you have been a great traveller?' Mrs. Glen said; and they talked all the way over, and she thought him 'just delightful.' French! No, not a bit like French—nor English either. The English, they are always condescending, and ready to explain your own countryside to you. I would say of a good race, but brought up abroad.

Lewis by this time had also found out the advantages of that word abroad. It saved all necessity for explanation. The Continent was taken in by it from one coast to the other, and even America and the East.

He went on his way to Stormont very cheerfully after his talk with Mrs. Glen. And the road was beautiful. It wound up the slope of a fine wooded bank behind the cliff, with tall

trees mounting upward, the roots of one showing bold and picturesque through the feathering tops of the others, in broken, irregular lines. When he had got about half way up he saw the house, of which one turret only surmounted the cliff. It was not large, but its small windows and the rough, half ruined battlements showed that, at some time or other, it might have been defended—which interested Lewis beyond measure. The lower story had been modernized, and twinkled with plate-glass windows receiving the full sunshine; but the building altogether was like something which had grown out of the soil, not a mere house made with hands.

Stormont led his visitor all over the place. He took him upon the bit of battlement that remained, and showed him that it commanded the cliff in reality, though this did not appear from below; and he took him into the chapel, a curious little detached piece of sixteenth century architecture, which nobody knew much about, desecrated to common uses which made Lewis shiver, though he said, quite simply, that he was 'not religious.'

'Don't say that before my mother,' Stormont

said. 'I am sure you are no heathen, for you were at church like myself; but she would think you so.'

'Oh, that is nothing,' said Lewis, 'one goes to church for company. I know nobody. It all amused me very much, and I made friends with you, and with the good pastor and his family—what do you call him, minister?'

'This is worse and worse. You must be careful not to say that you went to church to be amused,' Stormont said, with a big laugh. 'I don't myself find it amusing at all.'

'We use the word in different senses. You must excuse me if I do so in English—which is mixed up with other idioms in what you would call my mind, if I have got one,' Lewis said. 'I should call it, perhaps, interested. All is interesting to me here.'

'This ramshackle old place, among other things, I hope,' its master said, with a little conscious pride.

'I have not the least idea what ramshackle means. The old place, oh yes, more than anything. I begin to understand how it must feel to be like this, planted here for ever and ever—*in sæcula sæculorum.* It is very curious. It will

become a part of you—or rather, you are a part of it; not one man, but a race. For me, that have only money, the contrast is very great.'

'But you think you like the money best?'

'Otherwise, quite otherwise; but this is such a novelty. I have seen great castles, of course, but this which is not great, yet the same as greatness, it amuses me. Pardon there, I mistake again—it gives me great interest,' the stranger said.

Stormont's brow clouded over a little when Lewis said, 'this which is not great.' He knew very well it was not great, but to hear it said was less pleasant, and he was piqued by the shiver with which his visitor saw the common uses to which the chapel was put.

'I thought you said you were not religious—which is a dreadful confession to make.'

'No, I am not *devot*—few people are, unless they have been peculiarly brought up, at our age.'

'But in Scotland you are supposed to be always devout—unless you are a sceptic,' said Stormont. 'Sceptics are coming very much into fashion. Mr. Seton has a great respect for them. If you are a freethinker, it will be a

great pleasure to him to fathom your state of mind, and do everything for you. But keep quiet about all that before my mother, who is very rigid in the old way.'

'I am not a freethinker. I do not think, perhaps, at all so much as I ought,' said Lewis. 'One does not give one's attention, that is all. Ah, I think I understand; you have duties, a sort of anchor here. You cannot any longer do whatever you like; you must respect the house and the race. I admire all that very much, very much; but it cannot change the character; it cannot give more seriousness, more substance—I think that is the word.'

'It is often a great bore,' said Stormont, with a passing cloud upon his brow.

'I can understand that; but it is impressive,' Lewis said. And then the two young men went into the modernized part of the building, into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Stormont, in her widow's cap, sat knitting near one of those windows which looked out upon the long rolling fields of the strath and the hills beyond. The country was rich with green corn waving thick and close, a very different landscape from that which was lighted up by the rapid flow of the

river. The lady received Lewis very graciously. She made a few delicate researches to find out, if possible, to whom he belonged, but he was so ignorant of the Murrays, all and sundry, and so ready with his statement that the name had come to him as an inheritance along with money that curiosity was baffled. And Mrs. Stormont had no daughters to make her anxious. She thought him 'very foreign,' having more or less insight than the farmer's wife in the ferry-boat.

'But he has a very nice face,' Mrs. Stormont said, when he was gone. 'I like the looks of him; there's innocence in it, and a good heart. He would do very well for Katie Seton, if he means to settle here.'

'There is no question, so far as I know, either of his settling here or of Katie Seton. I would not be so free with a girl's name, mother, if I were you,' Stormont said, with some indignation.

Perhaps it was to call forth this remark, which afforded her some information, that his mother spoke.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE greater part of the company were assembled when Lewis entered the manse. He had been in some doubt how to dress for this rustic party, and indeed, had not some good fairy recalled to him a recollection of English male toilet in the evening, it is probable that he would have appeared in grey trousers, after the fashion of the Continent. But his good genius interfered (it would be profane to imagine that a guardian angel took note of any such details, though indeed it would have scandalised the Setons more to see an evening coat worn over grey trousers than to know, as Stormont had suggested, that the stranger was a free-thinker, or even guilty of some breach of the minor moralities). He appeared, however, with a black-silk handkerchief, tied in a somewhat

large bow, under his shirt-collar, instead of the stiff little white tie with which all the other men recognised the claims of an evening party. On the other side, he kept his hat in his hand, while all the other people left in the hall their informal caps and wideawakes, thus showing that he was not at all sure of his ground as they were, but felt it necessary to be prepared for everything. Perhaps he had never seen before the institution of tea. Little cups he had indeed swallowed at various hours during the day—after the déjeûner in foreign houses, at five o'clock in English ones, whenever the occasion served in the apartments of princely Russians—but an English tea, round a long table, with cakes and scones, and jam, and every kind of bread and butter dainty, he was totally unacquainted with.

He did not much care for the tea, and still less did he like the coffee, which was coffee-tea, a feeble decoction, and served with hot milk, as if it had been for breakfast; but, on the other hand, Lewis was quite capable of doing justice to the cakes, and not at all above the enjoyment of the new meal, which 'amused' him, according to his usual phrase, greatly.

And he made himself impartially agreeable to everybody, showing as strong a desire to please old Mrs. Borrodaile, in that cap which was the derision of the parish, as the youngest and prettiest of her daughters.

When the meal was over, and the company streamed into the drawing-room, where there was an unusual and suspicious vacancy, the furniture pushed into corners, betraying to all the habitués the intention of the hostess, Lewis was set down to the piano almost at once.

'Hush,' Mrs. Seton said to a little group about her. 'Just hold your tongues, young people. There is to be something rational to begin with; and let me see that you take advantage of your opportunities, for it is not often you can hear good music. Nonsense, Katie, not a word. Do you not see that the sooner he begins, the sooner it will be over? and I am just bound to ask him to play, after yesterday. Little monkeys,' the minister's wife continued, seating herself beside Miss Jean. 'They would like to have it all their own way; but I always insist on something rational to begin with. Oh, yes, yes, a great treat; some really good music. It is not often we

hear it. And this is just an opportunity, you know, a most unusual chance. Well, we do not know very much about him, but he is a most well-mannered young man, brought up abroad, which accounts for various little things in his appearance, and so forth. And just a beautiful performer on the piano. I wonder what that is. It sounds to me like Mozart, or Beethoven, or some of those that you don't so commonly hear. Bach, do you think? Well, I should not wonder. You know, songs are my branch.'

Lewis had gone into the first movement of his sonata before he had at all taken into consideration the character of his audience. He was, in reality, though Mrs. Seton took up the belief entirely without evidence, a very good performer, and had played to difficult audiences, whose applause was worth having. After the first few minutes, it became apparent to him by that occult communication which is in the air, and which our senses can give no account of, that this audience was not only unprepared but very much taken aback by the prospect of even half an hour of the really good music and rational enjoyment which their hostess promised. He could see when he suffered his eyes to stray

on a momentary rapid survey of the side of the room which was visible to him, the excellent Mrs. Borrodaile, with her fat hands crossed in her lap, and the air of a woman who knew her duty and was determined to do it. Stormont stood bolt upright in the corner, now and then lifting his eyebrows, or lowering them, or even forming syllables with his lips in telegraphic communication with one or other of the young ladies which showed impatience bursting through decorum in a guarded but very evident way. The minister, with resignation depicted in every line, even of his beard, turned vaguely over the leaves of a book. When the movement came to an end, there was a long breath of unquestionable relief on the part of the company generally.

'That's a very pretty thing,' said Mrs. Borrodaile, almost enthusiastic in the happiness of its being done with.

'Oh, hush, hush; that's only the first part. Dear me, do you not know that there are different parts in a great piece of music like that? Go back, go back to your seat,' whispered Mrs. Seton, loudly.

It was all that Lewis could do not to laugh

aloud behind the shelter of the piano. He thought he had never seen anything so comical as the resigned looks of the party generally, the reluctant hush which ran round the room as he struck the first notes of the second movement. Mischief began to twinkle in his eyes. He stopped, and his hearers brightened. Then he broke into the lively, graceful music of a gavotte, tantalising yet cheering—and finally, after another pause, dropped into a waltz, which was more than the young people could bear. He stood up, and looked at them over the piano, playing all the while. 'Dansons!' he cried: and in a moment, despite of Mrs. Seton and her precautions, the whole party was in movement. Never in Tayside had such a waltz been played before. Mrs. Seton was an excellent performer in her way. She was unwearied, and could go on for hours on a stretch, and she knew every tune that lad and lass could desire. But young Lewis, standing, stooping, encouraging them with his merry eyes, gliding with skilful hands on the keys, now softer, now louder, giving a double rhythm to the sweep of the dance, which was formal enough so far as the performers went, but yet took an additional grace and free-

dom from the music—played as no one had ever played to them before. When he stopped, with a peal of pleasant laughter that seemed to run into the music, after he had tired out everybody but Katie, the whole party came crowding round to thank him. It was so kind! it was so delightful!

'Oh, play us another, Mr. Murray,' cried the girls.

'Tut, tut,' said Mrs. Seton, bustling in, 'is that all your manners? So impatient that you made him stop that beautiful sonata, which it was just a privilege to hear, and then pestering him to play waltzes, which is a thing no good musician will do. I am sure, Mr. Murray, you have behaved like a perfect angel; but these girls shall not tyrannize over you. No, no, I'll just take the piano myself; it is no trouble to me. You will think it is bold of me, playing before such a performer, but I just never mind: and they like me as well as anyone. Come now, Katie, and see that Mr. Murray gets a nice partner. He will take a turn himself.'

And with this the indefatigable little woman of the house sat down, and played waltzes, polkas, and schottisches (which latter made

Lewis open his eyes) for hours on end, indicating meanwhile with her vigilant glances, and with little nods of her lively head, to her husband and children the various little offices in which it was necessary they should replace her. Thus a nod in the direction of Mrs. Borrodaile called the minister's attention to the terrible fact that one of his guests was going to sleep: while a movement of the eyebrows directed towards the factor's youngest daughter showed Katie that the young woman in question was partnerless, while a young man in another corner had escaped observation. Mrs. Seton managed to talk also all the time to Miss Jean, who sat beside her.

'I am so used to it; it is really no trouble to me. When you have young people growing up, you must just make up your mind to this sort of thing. Yes, yes, it becomes a kind of mechanical. Dear me, I must not talk; that bar was all wrong. But they're not particular, poor things, so long as you just keep on, and keep the time: but playing set pieces was always beyond me,' Mrs. Seton said. And on she went for hours, with a hard but lively hand, keeping capital time, and never tired.

The 'set pieces' which she thus deprecated,

and which had been beyond her, meant by implication the sonata which Lewis had begun to play.

As for that young man himself, he found pleasure in everything. The country girls were perhaps a little wanting in grace, and did not valse as high-born ladies do in the lands where the valse is indigenous; but they were light and lively, and the evening flew by to his great entertainment. Then there was a reel danced, at which he looked on delighted. Katie, who was a little ashamed of these pranks, stood by him primly, and pretended to be bored.

'You must not think that is the sort of thing we care for in Scotland,' she said. 'It is *quite* old-fashioned. You see, it amuses the country people, and mamma will always insist upon having one to keep up the old fashion; but you must not think that *we* care for it,' Katie said.

'That is unfortunate,' said Lewis. 'It is so much like the national dance everywhere. The tarantella—you have heard of the tarantella? It is like that. For my part, I like what is old-fashioned.'

'Oh, yes, in furniture—and things,' said Katie, vaguely. And she took pains not to commit herself further.

He was so good a dancer that she neglected Philip Stormont for him, to the great discontent of that young athlete, who thereupon devoted himself to Annie Borrodaile in a way which it went to Katie's heart to see. The windows stood wide open; the scent of the flowers came in; the roses and the tall white lilies shone in the silvery light. Everything was quaint and unreal to Lewis, to whom it had never happened to dance in the lingering daylight before. The strange evening radiance would have suited his own poetic valse better than the sharp, hard, unvaried music which Mrs. Seton continued to make with so much industry. When the reel was over, he went to the piano to relieve that lady.

'Let me play now. I shall like it; and you must be tired—you ought to be tired,' he said.

'Mr. Murray is the most considerate young man I ever saw,' said Mrs. Seton, shaking on her bracelets again. 'You see he has relieved me whether I would or not. As a matter of fact, I'm never tired so long as they go on; I'm

so used to it. But when somebody comes, you know, and really says to you, I would rather—though it is difficult to understand it, with so many nice girls dancing. And so you would not bring Lilias, Miss Margaret? I did hope, I must say, just for to-night.'

'You see,' said Miss Margaret, solemnly, 'she is not out yet.'

'Oh, you can't think that matters among friends. Katie is not out, the monkey. But, to be sure, as I tell her always, she is very different. Poor Lilias! don't you think it would be better for her just to see what the world is like a little before she comes out. She will be forming such high-flown ideas. I always say to mine, "Don't be excited. Oh, no, no, don't be excited. A ball in London will just be very much like a ball at home."'

'That is true enough in one way,' said Miss Margaret. 'Her Majesty, I suppose, is just like any other person: She has the same number of fingers and toes: but, when a young girl makes her curtsey to the Queen, I hope that will not be the way she will look upon her sovereign.'

'Oh, if you take it like that, nobody will

beat me in loyalty,' said Mrs. Seton. 'It was just as near a thing as possible last summer that Robert would have been sent for to preach at Crathie; and I am sure I would not have known if I was on my head or my heels. It's a thing that will come sooner or later; but there will be all the difference, no doubt, between seeing the Queen dressed up at a drawing-room, and seeing her in her own house, just as you might see a friend.'

'The difference will be all in Mr. Seton's advantage—when that comes to pass,' said Miss Margaret, with some satire in her voice.

'And do the wives go, too? Dear me, that will be a delightful ploy for you,' said Miss Jean, who, for her part, had not the slightest intention of offence.

At this Mrs. Seton, who was very good-natured, ended the episode by a laugh.

'I am sure they ought to; for what is a man without his wife? Robert, I am sure, would never put on his collar straight, if I was not there,' she said; and hurried away, intent on hospitable cares. It was then that Miss Jean found courage to address the stranger, who had left the piano for the moment, in

consequence of a little bustle about supper, and was standing by, with his friendly face smiling upon the party in general, but without any individual occupation.

'You will excuse me,' said Miss Jean, 'but I must make you my compliment upon your music—and more than your music,' she said, looking, to see how he would take it, into his face.

'There has not been very much music,' he said, with a smile. 'It was a mistake to begin anything serious.'

'It was perhaps a mistake; for you did not know how little the grand music is understood,' said Miss Jean. 'But, if you will let me say it, it was very fine of you, being just a young man, not used to be disappointed.'

'Indeed,' said Lewis, 'I am not unused to be disappointed.' Then he laughed. 'It was not worth calling a disappointment. It is all new here, and it amused me like the rest.'

'But I call it a fine thing to change like that in a moment, and play their waltz for them,' said Miss Jean. 'It means a fine nature—neither dour nor hasty.'

'Jean,' said Miss Margaret, with an admonitory

glance, 'you are probably giving your opinion where it is not wanted.'

'Don't say so, please!' cried Lewis, putting his hands together in a gesture of entreaty. It was one of those foreign ways which they all liked, though they would scoff at them in the abstract. 'I am very glad I pleased you. That makes me more happy even than if—the company' (he intended to say *you*, but paused, perceiving that he must not identify these ladies with the company) 'had liked music better.'

'But you must not think,' said Miss Jean, 'that they don't like music. They are very fond of it in their way, as much as persons can be without education.'

'She means,' said Miss Margaret again, 'that your high music is not common with us. You see, we have not Handel in every church like you. England is better off in some things. But, if you speak of education in general, it is far behind—oh, far behind! Every common person here has a chance with the best.'

'And do you like that?' Lewis said.

'Do I like it? Do I like democracy, and the levelling down of all we were brought up to believe in? Oh, no. But, on the other

hand, I like very well that a clever lad should have the means of bettering himself. There is good and evil in everything that is human,' said Miss Margaret, very gravely.

Lewis stood before her, with the smile still upon his face, observing her very slowly, wondering, if she knew who he was, whether she would consider him as a clever lad who had bettered himself. He could not have gazed so, without offence, into a younger face; as it was, his fixed look made Miss Margaret smile. To blush for anything so young a man could do, she would have thought beneath her dignity.

'You think what I am saying is very strange?' she said.

'Oh, no; it is very just, I think,' he cried; but at this moment Mr. Dunlop, the young assistant at Braehead came forward to offer Miss Margaret his arm. Lewis offered his to Miss Jean. 'This is not wrong?' he said. 'One does not require to wait to be told?'

'But I am sure a young lady would be more to your taste,' said Miss Jean, smiling benignly. 'Never mind me; I will go in in time. And look at all these pretty creatures waiting for somebody.'

But Lewis continued to stand with one arm held out, with his hat under the other, and the bow which some thought so French, but the Miss Murrays considered to be of the old school. Miss Jean accepted his escort in spite of herself. She said,

'I would like to hear you play the rest of *yon* upon our old piano. It was a very good piano in its day, but, like its mistress, it is getting old now.'

'A good instrument is like a lady; it does not get old like a common thing. It is always sweet,' said Lewis. 'I will come with—happiness.'

An Englishman, of course, would have said with pleasure, but these little slips on the part of Lewis, which were sometimes half intentional, were all amply covered by his accent.

'I will play to you as much as you please,' he added. 'I have nothing here to do.'

'But you came for the trout?' said Miss Jean. 'No, no, I will not take you from the trout. My sister Margaret would never hear of that. But when the fishing is over, perhaps——'

'I am no fisher. I sit and watch while Adam struggles with the trout; it amuses me. But

abroad, I suppose, we are less out of doors than in England. Mr. Stormont tells me we may expect a great many wet days, and what shall I have to do? May I come and play Beethoven during the wet days?'

'We will see what Margaret says,' said Miss Jean, a little alarmed lest she should be going too far.

Miss Margaret was on the other side of the table. He looked at her with a great deal of interest. She was a dark-eyed woman, looking older than her age, with hair which had a suspicion of grey in it. Miss Jean had no grey hairs. Her cheek was a little hollow, but that was almost the only sign of age in her. But they dressed beyond their years, and were quite retired among the matrons, neither of them making the slightest claim to youth.

'Miss Margaret is your elder sister?' he said, with an ingratiating openness. 'Pardon me, if I am very full of curiosity. I have seen your old castle, and I met you once upon the road; but there were then three ladies——?'

'That was Lilias,' said Miss Jean. 'She is quite young, poor thing. We stand in the place of mothers to her, and there are some

times that I think Margaret over-anxious. She will always rather do too much than too little.'

'She has a countenance that is very interesting,' said Lewis. Fortunately, he could not say here a face that amused him, which he might have done, had he not been very desirous of pleasing, and anxious not to offend.

'Has she not?' cried Miss Jean, triumphantly. 'She has just the very finest countenance! When she was young, I can assure you, she was very much admired.'

'I see no reason why she should not continue to be admired,' said Lewis.

'Oh, we have given up everything of that kind,' said Miss Jean, with a little laugh.

But, for almost the first time, she felt inclined to ask, Why should they? A woman of forty is not an old woman. And Miss Jean was very conscious that she herself was only thirty-eight.

'Perhaps it is the charge we have. I could not really say what it is—but all that has been long over. We have not been very long in this county. I think I may say that we will be glad to see you, and show you the old house. And then there is the other place,' Miss Jean continued. It was a little exciting to her to

talk to 'an utter stranger,' there were so few that ever appeared in Murkley. 'But there is nothing in that to see, only the outside. And whoever passes is welcome to see the outside.'

'The country people think it is haunted,' said Lewis.

'No, no; that is just a fancy. It is not haunted, it is quite a new place. If you want a place that is haunted, there is our old Walk. There is no doubt about that. We are so used to it that nobody is frightened, and I rather like it myself. We will let you see that,' Miss Jean said.

She was pleased with the stranger's bright face and deferential looks, and, in her simple kindness, was eager to find out something that would please him, though always with a doubt which dashed her pleasure, whether she was doing what her sister would approve.

'That will give me great happiness,' said Lewis again. 'It is all to me very new and delightful to see the houses and the castles. I have been to Mr. Stormont's house to-day. I have seen a great many old châteaux abroad; but here it is more simple, and more strange.

To be great persons and *seigneurs*, and yet not any more great than that.'

Miss Jean looked at him with a little suspicion, not understanding.

'We have never travelled,' she said, after a little pause. 'Which was a pity, I have often thought: and Margaret is of that opinion too. It might have made a great difference to us.'

She sighed a little as she spoke, and Lewis felt a hot wave of shame and trouble go over him. She meant, no doubt, that, if they had travelled, he would never have been thus mingled in their fate. He did not know what to say, for a sudden panic seized him lest she should find him out. Good Miss Jean had no idea that there was anything to find out. She ate her little piece of chicken daintily, anxious all the time lest she should be detaining her companion from the dancing, or from the society of the young people.

'Supper was really quite unnecessary after such a tea. It is a thing we never take.'

'You must try a little of this cream, Miss Jean,' cried Mrs. Seton. 'It is none of your confectioner's cream, that is all just froth put into a refrigerator, but our own making, and I

can recommend it: or a little jelly. The jelly had scarcely time to stand; it is not so clear as I should like; but you know the difficulty with country cooks. And, Mr. Murray, I hope you will make a good supper. I am sure there is nobody we have been so much obliged to. Everybody is speaking about your wonderful playing. Oh, yes, yes, I am inclined to be jealous, that is quite true. They used to be very well content with me, and now they will think nothing of me. But I am just telling Katie that, if she thinks she is going to get a fine performer like you to play her bits of waltzes, she is very much mistaken. Once in a way is very well—and I am sure they are all very grateful—but now they must just be content, as they have always been hitherto, with mamma. They are just ungrateful monkeys. You must be content with me, Katie, and very glad to get me. That is all I have to say.'

'If Miss Katie would wish me to hold the piano for the rest of the evening?—that is, when I have re-conducted this lady to the drawing-room.'

'Oh, will you?' cried Katie, with tones of

the deepest gratitude. 'It is only one waltz. Mamma never lets us have more than one waltz after supper; and it will be so kind; and we will enjoy it so much. Just one waltz more.'

'But let it be a long one,' the others cried, getting round him.

Lewis smiled, and waved his hand with the most genial satisfaction in thus so easily pleasing everybody.

'But I must first re-conduct this lady,' he said.

## CHAPTER VIII.

'WAS it Murray they called him?'

This question was put to Miss Jean, who had confessed, with a little hesitation, her rashness in inviting the stranger 'to play his music' at the Castle, as the sisters walked home. It was a very sweet evening; not later than eleven o'clock, notwithstanding all the dancing. The ladies had left, however, before that last waltz, and the music continued in their ears half the way home, gradually dying away as they left the green lane which led to the manse, and got into the park. Miss Jean was, as she described afterwards, 'really shy' of telling Margaret the venture she had made; for to meet a stranger whom you know nothing about *out* is a very different thing from asking him to your house, especially when it was a young

man; and there was always Lilias to think upon. So that on the whole Miss Jean felt that she had been rash.

'To tell you the truth, I cannot say I noticed, Margaret. Yes, I rather think it was Murray; but you never catch a name when a person is introduced to you. And, after all, I am not sure. It might be me she was calling Murray —though, to be sure, she never calls me anything but Miss Jean.'

'If it was Murray, it will be easy to find out to what family he belongs,' said Miss Margaret. 'And Lilias need not appear.'

'Dear me,' cried Miss Jean; 'but that would be a great pity, Margaret, and a great disappointment to the young man. I thought to myself to ask him to come and play was a kind of liberty with a stranger, but then, I thought, it will be a pleasure to him, poor lad, to see such a pretty creature as our Lily. It is not much we have to give in return.'

'I am not fond of young men coming to stare at Lilias,' said Miss Margaret. 'You forget she has no mother. You and me are bound to be doubly particular; and how do we know what might happen? She is very inexperienced. She

might like the looks of him; for he has a pleasant way with him—or, even if it were not so bad as that, yet who can tell? it might be hurtful to the young man's own peace of mind.'

'Well, that is true, Margaret,' said Miss Jean. 'I thought it would have been better to consult you first—but, dear me, one cannot think of everything; and it seems so innocent for two young people to meet once in a way, especially when the young man has his head full of his music, and is thinking about nothing else.'

'That's a very rare case, I am thinking,' Miss Margaret said.

'It is a very rare case for a young man to be musical at all,' Miss Jean replied, with a little heat—which was an unquestionable fact on Tayside.

They went along noiselessly, with their softly shod and softly falling feet, two slim, dark figures in the pale twilight, with the maid trotting after them. But for her plump youthfulness, they might have been three congenial spirits of the place in a light so fit for spiritual appearances. There was nothing more said until they had almost reached home; then Miss

Margaret delivered herself of the conclusion to which she had been coming with so much thought.

'It was perhaps a little rash—considering the charge we have, and that the young man is an utter stranger—but one cannot think of everything, as you say. And I cannot see why you should be deprived of a pleasure——there are not so many of them—because of Lilias. We will say just nothing about it. We will trust to Providence. The likelihood is she will be busy with her lessons, poor thing, and she will think it is just you playing the piano.'

'Me!' cried Miss Jean, 'playing like *yon*.'

'Well, well, you know I am no judge, and Lilias not much better. If he can satisfy me what Murrays he belongs to, and can stand a near inspection, she may come in; I'll make no objection,' Miss Margaret said, graciously, as she opened the door.

The key was turned when the family went to bed, but the hall-door of Murkley Castle stood open all day long in primitive security. Miss Jean lingered a little upon the steps.

'It is just the night,' she said, 'to take a turn down the Walk.'

'Oh, you'll not do that, mem!' cried Susie, the maid.

'And why not, you silly lassie? If you'll come with me, you will see there is nothing to fear.'

'Eh no, mem!' cried Susie; 'no, if you would give me the Castle to mysel'.'

'What is that you are saying about the Walk? Come in, Jean, it is too late for any of your sentiment. And, Susie, my woman, go you to your bed. If we had any business in the Walk, both you and me would go, be you sure, and I would like to see you say no to your mistress. Come in, that I may lock the door.'

Nobody contradicted Miss Margaret in that house. Miss Jean glided in most submissively, and Susie behind her, trying hard, but ineffectually, to make as little noise. But, in spite of herself, Susie's feet woke echoes on the old oak floor, and so did the turning of the key in the great door. The noises roused at least one of the inhabitants. Old Simon, the butler, indeed slept the sleep of the just in a large chair, carefully placed at the door of the passage which led to 'the offices,' in order that he might hear

when the ladies came home; but Lilias appeared presently at the head of the fine old open staircase, which descended, with large and stately steps, into the hall. She had an open book laid across her arm, and her eyes were shining with excitement and impatience. They had wept, and they had perhaps dozed a little, these eyes, but were now as wide open as a child's when it wakes in the middle of the night. Her hair was tumbled a little, for she had been lying on a sofa, and a white shawl was round her shoulders; for even in a June night, in an old house with all the windows open, especially when you are up late, you are apt to feel cold on Tayside. She held a candle in her hand, which made a spot of brightness in the dim light.

'Oh, Margaret,' she said, 'oh, Jean! is that you at last; and was it a dance? I went up to the tower, and I am sure I heard the piano.'

'You would be sure to hear the piano whatever it was,' said Margaret, silencing her sister by giving a sudden pull to her gown. 'There is always music at the manse. There was a grand sonata by one of Jean's favourites, and

her head is so full of it she can talk nothing but music.'

'Oh, a sonata!' cried Lilias, relieved, and she gave her head a small toss, and laughed; 'that is a long, long thing on the piano, and you are never allowed to say a word. I'm glad that I was not there.'

'That was what I told you,' said Miss Margaret. 'Now go to your bed, and you'll hear all the rest to-morrow. You should have been in your bed an hour ago at least. To-morrow you shall have a full account of everything, and Jean will play you a piece of the sonata. I am sure she has got it all in her head.'

'Oh, I'm not minding!' said Lilias, lightly.

She thought, on the whole, her novel had been better.

She stood thus lighting them as they came upstairs, and they thought her the prettiest creature that had ever been seen; her sweet complexion shining against the dark wainscot, her eyes giving out more light than the candle. It smote Miss Jean's heart to deceive her, and it was a faltering kiss which she gave to this little victim. But Miss Margaret carried things with a high hand.

'It would be just barbarous,' Miss Margaret said, when they were safe within the little suite of rooms that formed their apartment, one chamber opening into the other, 'to tell her all about it to-night. You can tell her to-morrow, when there's a new day in her favour. She would just cry and blear her eyes; but to-morrow is a new day.'

'I cannot bide,' cried Miss Jean, 'whatever you may say, Margaret—I just cannot bide to disappoint the darling. I am sure it went to my heart to see her just now so sweet and bonnie, and nobody to look at her but you and me.'

'The bonnier she is, and the sweeter she is, is that not all the more reason, ye foolish woman, to keep her safe from vulgar eyes? Would you make her, in all her beauty, cheap and common at these bits of parties at the manse? No, no. We had no mother either, and perhaps we did not have our right chance, but that's neither here nor there. We're in the place of mothers to her, and Lilias shall have her day!'

This silenced Miss Jean, whose mind was dazzled by her sister's greater purposes and larger grasp. She retired to her inner room

with a compunction, feeling guilty. It was a shame to deceive even for the best motives, she felt; but, on the other hand, she could relieve her conscience to-morrow, and there was such sense in all Margaret said.

'Margaret is just a wonderful creature for sense,' Miss Jean said to herself. This had indeed been her chief consolation in all the difficulties of her life.

Meanwhile, other conversations were going on among the groups which streamed from the manse, taken leave of heartily by the family at the gate. It was 'such a fine night' that Mrs. Seton herself threw a shawl over her head, and walked, with those of her friends who were walking, to the gate.

'Oh, yes, yes, I'll not deny, though I say it that shouldn't, I think it has gone off very well,' she said; 'and, indeed, we have to thank Mr. Murray, for I take no credit to myself to-night. Oh, yes, I'll allow in a general way I do my best to keep you all going: but, dear me! I'm not to be mentioned by the side of Mr. Murray. A performer like him condescending to play your bits of waltzes and polkas for you!—you ought to be very proud. Oh, yes, I know fine playing

when I hear it, though I never did much, except in the way of dance music, myself. In dance music I used to think I would give in to nobody; but pride will have a fall, and I have just sense enough to know when I'm beaten—oh, yes, that I am. You'll be very glad to come back to me when Mr. Murray is not to be had, I make no doubt; you are just ungrateful monkeys, but I'll trust you for that.'

Mrs. Seton's voice ran on in a sort of continued solo, to which all the other murmurs of talk afforded an accompaniment. She shook hands with Lewis at the gate with the most cordial friendliness.

'And whenever you weary,' she said, 'be sure you just come up to the manse. Mr. Seton will always be glad of a talk, and there is nothing I like so well as to hear about foreign society and scenery and all that; and I can understand it better than most, for I have been up the Rhine myself: and Katie will be most grateful for a little help with her German; so, you see, you'll be welcome on every hand,' the lady said, with a grasp of his hand which meant everything she said.

Lewis walked to the river-side with young

Stormont, who was not quite so cordial.

'You've had it all your own way to-night, Murray,' this young fellow said, with a laugh which was not pleasant to hear.

'They are very kind to a stranger—it is true hospitality; but I think it was you that had it your own way, for you would not listen to my music,' said Lewis. Then he, too, laughed—a laugh which was to the other's like sunshine to a cloud. 'I did cheat you all the same,' he added, 'for the waltz was Beethoven's too—and quite as difficult, if you had but known.'

Mr. Stormont did not understand much about Beethoven, but he felt that it was impossible to say the fellow was stuck-up about his music; privately in his own mind he despised all male performances as things unworthy of the sex.

'Miss Seton dances very prettily with you, my friend,' said Lewis. 'You have practised much together, that is what one can see. I watched you while I was playing. She dances always well, but better with you than anyone. But tell me, for you know, about those ladies whom everyone calls Miss Margaret and Miss Jean.'

'Oh, the old ladies at Murkley! Why, these are the people we were talking about on Sunday. You made a great impression there—we all noticed,' cried Stormont, with a laugh, which this time was somewhat rude, but quite cordial, 'the impression you made there.'

'Yes?' said Lewis, gravely; with the thoughts he had in his mind he did not mean to allow any ridicule. 'It is the Miss Margaret that is the eldest. She will have everything, I suppose, in your English way.'

'Oh, if that is what you are thinking of,' cried Stormont, in a startled tone; and then he stopped and laughed again, the sound this time pealing into all the echoes. 'No, no, my fine fellow,' he said, 'if that's what you're thinking of, you are out there; when it's women, they're co-heiresses. The law has not so good an opinion of them as to make an eldest son of a woman: so you're out there.'

'Out there!' said Lewis, astonished. 'What does that mean? And I do not understand co-heiresses either? These ladies—no, I will not say amuse me—I am interested in them. I have heard of them before I came here—indeed, it was for that cause,' he added, with one of

his imprudent confidences, then stopped short, giving emphasis to what he said. 'What is meant by co-heiresses, if you please?'

'It means,' said Stormont, with a chuckle of mingled ridicule and contempt, 'that when there are sisters they share and share alike. It was not very much to begin with, so you may judge, when it is divided, whether it is worth anyone's while now. But try, my fine fellow, try; you will not find many rivals,' he added, with a scream of laughter.

Lewis looked up very gravely as he walked along by his companion's side.

'There is something which amuses you,' he said; 'perhaps it is that I am slow in English. I do not perceive the joke.'

'Oh, there is no joke,' said Stormont, coming to himself; and they walked to the river-side, where the ferryman was waiting, in a subdued condition, neither saying much. Lewis, who had been in extremely high spirits after his success at the party, had suddenly fallen into a blank of embarrassment and perplexity, which silenced him altogether. He was angry, without quite knowing why, with Stormont. But this was nothing to the confusion which had over-

whelmed his mind. He walked up to his own inn in a state of bewilderment which it would be difficult to describe. It was partially comic, but it was not until he had reached his parlour, and seated himself opposite to the little paraffin lamp, which always smelt a little, and gave to his most intimate thoughts a sort of uneasy odour, that he was able to laugh at his own discomfiture; then gradually the amusing aspect of the whole business came over him; he laughed, but neither long nor loud. It was too disagreeable, too annoying to laugh at after the first realization of the dilemma. He was quite hushed and silenced in his simple mind by the discovery he had made.

For it is time now to put plainly before the reader the intention with which this young man had come to Murkley. It was with the well considered purpose of remedying the evident mistake which his old friend and patron had made. Sir Patrick had withdrawn his fortune from his own family, and given it to his adopted son, leaving his grandchildren poor, while Lewis was rich—Lewis, who had what people call, 'no claim' upon him, who had only been his son and servant for eight years of his life,

giving him the love, and care, and obedience which few sons give with so entire a devotion. He had no claim but this, and he had expected nothing. When he found himself Sir Patrick's heir, and a rich man, no one was so much surprised as Lewis; but still, so it was, and he accepted his patron's will as he would have accepted anything else that happened in which he himself had a share. But, as soon as he heard of the family and their disappointment, Lewis had made up his mind that he must do his best to remedy it. It would be his duty, he thought, to offer himself and his possessions to the lady who ought to have been Sir Patrick's heir. When he had discovered that these ladies at Murkley were no longer young, it would be too much to assert that it was not a shock to him. But the shock lasted only for a moment. He had not come to Murkley with the intention of pleasing his own fancy, but to fulfil a duty; and the age of the lady, or her appearance, or any such secondary matter was little to him. In all the easy and light-hearted acceptance of the position which characterised him, he had never for a moment allowed himself to think that he was free to

abandon his plan, if, on examining into it, it proved against his tastes. His tastes, after all, were involved only in a secondary degree. Duty was the first, and to that nothing made any difference. If Sir Patrick's heiress had been fifty, or if she had been deformed and ugly, he would still have laid his fortunes at her feet. It did not indeed occur to him to separate himself from the fortune, and offer the money alone. He was not a Quixote. To denude himself of all he had did not occur to him as a natural thing to do: but to share it was more than natural, it was an obligation, a call of honour. It was with this view that he had looked at Miss Margaret across the table. It was impossible not to feel that the relationship would be a peculiar one, but he felt nothing in himself that would prevent him from entering into it worthily. Lewis had none of that physical instinct of superiority which makes men despise women. He did not think, as unfortunately most men do, with a curious want of generosity, that the first object of a woman's life must be to secure a husband, and that every sense of congruity, all good taste and delicacy of liking, must succumb to this im-

perious necessity. This was not the least in his thoughts. When he looked at Miss Margaret, the thought in his mind was not so much any objection of his own to marry her, as the certainty that she would object to marry him. He felt that it would be a derogation, that she would come down from her dignity, give up her high estate, if she accepted what he had to offer.

He studied her face with this idea in his mind. Was it the least likely that a woman with a countenance like that, would buy even justice so? Miss Jean, to whom he was talking, was more malleable. It bewildered him a good deal to look at them, and to think that one or the other of these ladies before whom he bowed so low, who looked at him with timidly suspicious eyes of middle age, might, should, must, if he had his way, become his wife. But in his own person he never hesitated; he did not know how it was to be brought about. If it could be done, as 'abroad,' by the intervention of an agent, the matter would have been greatly simplified. But this, he was partially aware, was not possible in England. Neither in England, according to

what he had heard, would it be possible to settle it as a friendly arrangement, a piece of mercenary business. No, he knew he must conform to English rules, if he would be successful, and woo the wronged lady with all the ordinary formulas. He would have to fall in love with her, represent himself as dying for her. All these preliminaries Lewis had felt to be hard, but he had determined within himself to go through with them. He would be heroically tender, he would draw upon novels and his imagination for the different acts of the drama, and carry them through with unflinching courage. He was resolved that nothing should be wanting on his part. But it cannot be denied that Stormont's revelation took him altogether aback. Co-heiresses!—he could not offer himself to two ladies—he could not declare love and pretend passion for two! He remembered even that there was a third, the one in the blue veil, and it was this thought that at last touched an easier chord in his being, and relieved him with a long low tremulous outburst of laughter.

'Three!' he said to himself all at once, and he laughed till the tears stood in his eyes. He

had been ready loyally to overcome all other objections, to bend before a beloved object of forty, and to declare that his happiness was in her hands, with the purest loyalty of heart and truth of intention; but before three—that was impossible—that was out of the question. He laughed till he was ready to cry; then he dried his eyes, and took himself to task as disrespectful to the ladies, who had done nothing to forfeit anyone's respect, and then burst forth into laughter again. Here was indeed a *reductio ad absurdum*, beyond which it was impossible to go. Lewis tried hard to bring himself back to the point from which he started—the sacred duty, as he felt, of restoring his fortune to the source whence it came—but he could not get past this tremendous, unthought-of obstacle. Three of them! and he could not marry more than one, whatever he did. Now, also, it became evident that injustice must be done in whatever way the difficulty should be settled. He had endeavoured to believe, it is needless to say, that the representative of the Murrays might have turned out to be young and marriageable; he had been dazzled by bright hopes that she might be fair and sweet, and every-

thing a bride should be. When these hopes and visions dispersed in the sober certainty that the heiress of the Murrays was the eldest of three all much above his own age, it had been a disenchantment, but he had stood fast. He had not been afraid even of Miss Margaret—he had said to himself that he would respect and venerate her, and be grateful to one who would thus stoop to him from the serene heights; but to make up for the slights of fortune to three ladies at once—Lewis, with the best will in the world, felt that this would not be in his power.

When he got up next morning, the mirth of the night was over; he felt then that the position was too serious for laughter. For a moment the temptation of giving up altogether a duty which was too much for him came over his mind. Why should not he go away altogether and keep what was his? He was not to blame; he had asked nothing, expected nothing. He was guiltless towards the descendants of his old friend, and they knew nothing either of him or of his intentions. He had but to go away, to walk back to the 'George' at Kilmorley, and turn back into the world, leaving his portmanteaux to follow him, and he would be

free. But somehow this was an expedient which did not please his imagination at all. The little rural place, the people about who had become his friends, the family with which he felt he had so much to do, kept a visionary hold upon him from which he could not get loose. He struggled even a little, repeating to himself many things which he could do if he were to free himself. He had never seen London—he had never been in England. The season was not yet entirely over, nor London abandoned; he could yet find people there whom he had met, who would introduce him, who would carry him to those country houses in which he had always heard so much of the charm of England lay. All this he went over deliberately, trying to persuade himself that in the circumstances it was the best thing to do; but the result of his thoughts was that, as soon as he felt it was decorous to do so, he set out for the Castle. One visit, in any case, could do, he reflected, no harm.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE next day, as Adam had prophesied, the weather changed, or rather it changed during the night, and the morning rose pale and weeping, with a sky out of which all colour had departed, and an endless blast, almost white, so close was the shower, of falling rain. Little rivulets ran away down the pebbly slope of the village street towards the river when Lewis got up; the trees were all glistening; the birds all silenced; a perpetual patter of rain filling the air. The country carts that stood at the door of the 'Murkley Arms' had the air of having been boiled; the horse glossy yet sodden, with ears and tail in the most lugubrious droop; the paint of the wheels and shafts glistening, the carter, with a wet sack over his wet shoulders, looking as if the

water could be wrung out of him. He was being served with a dram by Janet at the door, who had her shawl over her cap to preserve her.

'Now tak' my advice,' she was saying, 'and be content with that. It's good whiskey. If you stop at every door to get something to keep out the damp, ye'll be in a bonnie condition to go home to your wife at the hinder end.'

'Would ye have me get my death o' cauld?' said the man.

'Eh!' said Janet, 'I daurna refuse to serve ye; for ye would just gang straight to Luckie Todd's, and her whiskey's bad, and siller is a' her thocht; but weel I wat, if ye were my man, I wad rather ye got your death of cauld than of whiskey. And that's my principle, though I keep a public mysel'.'

Lewis, standing at his window, with the paths and the roofs all glistening before him, and the sky so low down that it seemed almost to touch the high gable of the house opposite, listened to the dialogue with a smile. It was a new aspect under which he now saw the village life. Many of the doors were shut

which usually stood open; the children had disappeared from the road; silence took the place of the small, cheerful noises, the calls of the women, the chatter of the infants; the cocks and hens, which generally strutted about in full liberty, had taken refuge beneath a cart, where they huddled together lugubriously—everything was changed. Lewis could not but think of young Stormont, with a shrug of malicious pleasure, as he amused himself with his breakfast: for he supposed erroneously that this must be one of the days of which Stormont had spoken so sadly, when there was nothing to do. But by-and-by Lewis also found that there was nothing to do. He laughed at himself, which was still more comic. Stormont was at home; he had his library, though he did not make use of it; and his mother's piano, though he knew nothing about music; and he had no doubt some sort of business concerning his small estate, and he had spoken of amusing himself with fly-making and gun cleaning. But Lewis soon woke up to the sad conviction that, so far as he was concerned, there was absolutely nothing to occupy the heavy hours. Of the two or three books which the 'Murkley Arms'

could boast, one was Robertson's 'History of Scotland' in a small form, with small print, discouraging to a careless reader, and another the 'Romance of the Forest.' He was not a great reader under the best of circumstances, and these did not tempt him. He had few correspondents, none indeed to whom he could sit down on a dreary day and unbosom himself. The only thing that offered him any distraction was his drawing. He took out his sketch-books, and selected one he had made on the water-side, in order to enlarge and complete it. But he was not enthusiastic enough to work steadily, and he was unfortunately aware that his slightest sketches were his best. When Janet came upstairs 'to speak about the denner,' as she said, her compassion was aroused by his evident weariness.

'Adam's awa' to the watter,' she said. 'Watter below and watter aboon, he'll get plenty o't. It's a grand day for the fushin', though it's no so good for us poor mortals. Would ye no gang doon, and see how he's getting on?'

'But it pours,' said Lewis, 'and with water above and water below, as you say——'

'Hoot ay,' said Janet, 'but ye're young, and

ye're neither sugar nor salt, you'll no melt. At your age a bit of a shower does little harm; and ye're just wrang biding in the house all day with nothing to do.'

'That is true enough,' Lewis said, but as he looked at the pouring rain and the wet roads he shook his head. 'I don't see that one can gain much by getting wet, Mrs. Janet.'

'Dear me! a young gentleman at your age! Weel, it's a grand thing to take care of yourself. It's just what ye canna get young folk to do. There's young Mr. Philip out on the water from the skreigh of day; he just never minds. I'm no saying it's good for him. But they say it's grand weather for the fushin', and that makes up for everything with them, the gomerals. If they had your sense, Mr. Murray.'

Lewis did not think she had a very high opinion of his sense, and he was somewhat piqued by her suspicious semi-approval, and by her description of Stormont, in whom the young man had come to see an antagonistic type of mankind. The more fool he, if he had been out all the morning between the water below and the water above, all for the sake of a few fish. But the description piqued

Lewis. He stood at his window, and looked out for the twentieth time, and it did not look tempting. Why, indeed, should he go out, and get himself wet and dirty to please the prejudices of Janet. He had always heard that the English went out in all weathers; that they had even a preference for mud and damp, characteristic features of their own climate. But why should he emulate this strange fancy? He sat down to his drawing again, but he did not get any satisfaction out of it. Not to be approved of was terrible to him. He could not bear that even Janet should have a small opinion of his hardiness and manly bearing. This acted so strongly upon Lewis that after a while he found himself pulling on his strongest boots and getting into his thickest great-coat. The boots were not very strong; he had never had any chance of those exposures to water and weather in which impervious coverings are necessary; but, having protected himself as well as he could, he sallied forth at last with his umbrella, and went down to the river-side. There was little or no wind, and the rain fell in a perpendicular flood, soaking everything. Lewis under his umbrella went patiently on, enduring

it manfully, but unable to see any pleasure in his progress through the flood. He met Katie Seton and her brother near the church. She was covered up in an ulster, with a hood over her little hat. Her cheeks were like roses 'just washed in a shower.'

'Oh, we never stay in for anything,' she said. 'It is always better out than in.'

Lewis in his courtesy would have made over his umbrella, but the girl would none of it.

'Oh, I can't bear to carry an umbrella,' she said.

He went on to the river-side with a little shrug of his shoulders. And there was Adam, drenched, but glowing, pulling out trout after trout, too busy to talk; and lower down the stream, in the middle of it, amid the rush of broken water, where the river swirled round the rock, young Stormont, almost up to his middle, in great fishing-boots, with sluices of water flowing from his glazed sou'-wester.

'Jolly day!' Stormont cried through the rain.

'Grand for the trout,' said Adam.

Lewis stood on the bank under the umbrella and shrugged his shoulders.

'I wish you joy of it,' he said. His feet were

growing wet, the rain, though there was no wind, came in his face with something like a special malice. He thought there was something savage in the gratification of the two fishers. After he had watched them for a time, he asked Adam for some of the trout in his basket, and went home, carrying, with no great delight in the office, two uoble trout tied together with a string. These were cold and slimy, but he overcame his repugnance. Janet saw him return, with his wet feet and the fish hanging from his hand, with a mixture of amusement and dissatisfaction.

'Will they be for your lunch?' she said, with a contemptuous thought of the fondness for eating with which Scotland always credits the Englishman.

'Oh, no,' Lewis cried, with horror; 'do you think I would carry these things for myself? Put them in a basket; I will take them to the Castle, where,' he added, with a little innocent pleasure in making the announcement, 'I am going this afternoon.'

Janet looked at him with a certain contemptuous disappointment. She thought he was going

to carry the fish as a proof of his own skill and prowess.

'I'll maybe no find a basket. What ails ye at them as they are?' she said, with lowering brows: which our young man did not understand at all, for it is needless to say that such an idea never crossed his ingenuous mind.

He went upstairs a little surprised that not even now, when he had proved his manhood by wetting his boots (which he hastened to change), did he please Mrs. Janet, as he called her, but without the slightest clue to her suspicions. And after he had got into dry apparel, and eaten his luncheon, Lewis sallied forth once more, much pleased to be able to say that he was going to the Castle, where, indeed, the sound of the bell at the door stirred and excited the whole household, which had no hope of anything so refreshing as a visitor.

Miss Margaret was seated above stairs with Lilias in a room devoted to what was called her studies, and generally known by the title of the book-room, though there were but few books in it. Lilias jumped up and rushed to the window in the very midst of the chapter of con-

stitutional history which she was reading with her self-denying elder sister.

'There is no carriage,' she said; 'it will be somebody from the village.'

'Never mind who it is,' said Miss Margaret; 'we must finish our chapter.'

When the sound of music was diffused through the house some time after, Miss Margaret had a shrewd guess as to who the visitor was, and all the objections that existed to his introduction to Lilias came up before her mind, while the girl pursued, alas! very dully, the history of parliamentary institutions. 'It will be the tuner come to put the piano in order,' she said by-and-by, she too speaking unawares in the middle of a sentence. She felt that it was a fib, but yet it was not necessarily a fib, for why should not it be the tuner? It was about his time, she said to herself. This took from Lilias all desire to go downstairs, all expectation of a break in the dulness. She went on with the drone of the history, which, to tell the truth, was quite as much a burden to Miss Margaret as to herself. But duty reigned supreme in the bosom of the elder sister, and

Lilias had always been submissive. She was well aware, too, of the advantage of having Margaret instead of a governess. Miss Jackson would not have permitted her to slip to the window with her book in her hand to see who it was.

Miss Jean was alone in the drawing-room, which was a large room, with a number of small windows, high set in the thick old walls, each with its own little recess. It was not light generally, but there were a great many Rembrandtish effects, intense lights and shadows in bright weather. To-day all was a sort of monotone of greenish dimness: the wet trees glistening; the expanse of the wet park throwing a vague reflection into the air. The room occupied a corner of the house, and the windows on one side looked out upon a lime-tree walk, which lay under the old enclosing wall, a high, semi-defensible erection, with a turret at the corner; and on the other looked on the park, which sloped downward towards the river. To the right hand the red and blue roofs of the village glistened under the rain, the tiles giving a little gleam of colour which the slates did their best to neutralize. Nothing could

be more complete than the air of mutual protection and dependence which the village and the Castle bore, though the Castle was but a small and homely representative of power. Miss Jean sat alone in the window which commanded this prospect most fully. She had all her work materials there; a basket of fine silks in every shade, a case of pretty, shining silver implements, scissors, and thimbles, and bodkins, and on her lap a wonderful table-cover, upon which, as long as any of the young people remembered, she had been working a garland of flowers. It was her own invention, drawn from Nature, and consequently, as she sometimes explained with a little pride, the winter time, which was the best time for working in general, was lost to her, since she always liked to have her models under her eyes. At the present moment, a little cluster of pansies was before her in a glass, and the colours arranged upon the table in which she was to copy them. But she was not working; her table-cover lay on her lap. She was looking out vaguely upon the rain, and the wet trees, and the village roofs. It was supposed that Miss Jean was the one of the family who leant towards the sentimental,

and no doubt there had been incidents in her gentle life which justified the opinion. She was thinking, as she would have said—perhaps even so late as this the soft-hearted, middle-aged maiden was dreaming—but, if so, nobody was the wiser for Miss Jean's dreams. They never prevented her ready attention to any appeal, and she only indulged in them when quite alone. They alternated with the flowers of the table-cover in her mind, and both were emanations of the same soft and tender spirit. The room was very still around this one quiet figure; behind her the dim atmosphere was brighter with the glow of a small, but cheerful fire. It was the opinion of the Miss Murrays, as of many other comfortable people, that in wet weather an old house was always the better for a fire. The little *pétillement* of the fire and the soft rush of the falling rain outside were all the sounds audible in the extreme stillness. What wonder that Miss Jean should drop the embroidered pansies on her lap, and take to thoughts which were a sort of spiritual prototypes of the pansies—thoughtlets, little musings, dreamikins, so to speak; they brought now and then from her gentle bosom

the softest little sigh, not a sigh that hurt, but one that soothed. There was no part of her time that Miss Jean liked better than these moments which she spent by herself, when Margaret was reading history with Lilias. She closed up a pretty little note-book, which had been in her hand, when she heard the sound of the bell. If truth must be told, she had been writing in it a pretty little verse—a pansy of still another kind; for Miss Jean belonged to the age when it was a pretty accomplishment to write charming little 'copies of verses,' a thing very sweet and delightful for a young woman to do.

The character of the place seemed to change at once when Lewis came in. Life, and cheerfulness, and variety came with him. He was very anxious to please and make himself agreeable. He told her of his walk to the water-side, of Stormont in the river, and Adam on the bank; water above and water below.

'You will think me very effeminate,' he said. 'I much prefer this nice drawing-room;' and he looked round it with an admiring air that pleased Miss Jean.

To tell the truth, Lewis was thinking that,

though picturesque, it was probably damp, a suggestion which would not have pleased Miss Jean at all.

'Gentlemen are very venturesome,' said Miss Jean: 'indeed, the wonder is that they are not all laid up with rheumatism—but they're used to it, I suppose.'

'I am not at all used to it,' said Lewis; and then he added, with one of his confidential impulses: 'A great part of my life I have spent in attendance upon a dear old friend.'

'Indeed,' said Miss Jean, her eyes lighting up with interest. 'That is out of the way for a young man. You will excuse me, but I take a great interest—not father or mother, as you say a friend?'

'No: my godfather, who took me up when my father and mother died, and who was like father and mother in one. He was lonely and old, and I never left him—for years.'

As Lewis spoke there came a gleam of moisture into his eyes, as he looked smiling into the face of the sympathetic woman, who had she but known— But no suspicion crossed the mind of Miss Jean.

'Dear me!' she said; 'lonely and old are sad

words. And you gave up your young life to him? There are few that would have done that.'

'Oh, no, there was no giving up, it was my happiness,' said Lewis; 'no one was ever so kind; he was my dear companion. And then, you know, abroad'—he smiled as he said this generic word which answered for everywhere—'abroad boys are not all brought up to be athletic; to defy the elements, as in England—'

'I do not know very much about England,' said Miss Jean, entirely unconscious that her visitor meant to embrace Tayside in this geographical term, 'but there is too much fishing and shooting here. That is my opinion. I like a young man to be manly, but there are more things in the world than the trout or the birds. And no doubt you would learn your music to please your invalid? That is very touching. I took an interest from the first, but still more now when I know the cause.'

'That reminds me,' cried Lewis, 'that my sole excuse for coming was to play to you.'

'Don't say that, Mr. Murray. We are very glad to see you,' said Miss Jean, though not without a quiver, 'without any reason at all.'

'That is very kind, more kind than I can say. A stranger has double reason to be grateful.'

'The advantage is ours,' said Miss Jean, with old-fashioned politeness; and then there was a momentary pause: for the question would obtrude itself upon her, in spite of herself, 'What will Margaret say?'

And then Lewis went to the piano and began to play. Miss Jean took up her work and threaded her needle, and prepared for enjoyment, for to work and be read to, or hear music played to you was one of her beatitudes; but by-and-by the table-cover fell upon her knees again, and she turned her face towards the musician in a growing ecstacy of attention. Music is not like any other of the arts, it does not address itself to the intellect. Miss Margaret was far more clever than her sister, but she had no comprehension of Beethoven. Jean had the ear to hear. At first her mind was somewhat agitated by doubts whether her sister would approve, and even whether it was altogether prudent to have thus received a young man whom nobody knew. She thought of the text, 'Lay hands suddenly on no man,' and she was a little confused about the matter alto-

gether. And, had she been like her sister, Miss Jean would have continued in this mood; she would have recognized that it was good playing, but her mind would have been able to consider the original question all through it, and her doubts, it is possible, might have been increased rather than set at rest by the proficiency of the young musician, a proficiency to which, so far as her experience went, very few gentlemen attained. But Miss Jean had a faculty which Margaret lacked. After a while she forgot everything but the divine strain that was in her ear. The table-cover slipped over her knees to the ground, and she was not even aware of it; the silks, so carefully arranged in their right shades, dropped too, and lay all tangled and mixed up on the carpet. Miss Jean did not care. She neither saw nor heard anything but the music; she sat with her hands clasped, her eyes fixed upon the piano, her mind absorbed. When he stopped, she could not speak; she waved her hand to him inarticulately, not even knowing what she wanted to say. And Lewis, after a little pause, resumed. It was some time since he had touched a piano, and his mind too was agitated and full of many questions. It

was not for nought that he had got admittance here. Perhaps a little of the elevation of a martyr was in his thoughts. It had not occurred to him, so long as Sir Patrick lived, that he was sacrificing his youth to the old man. It had not occurred to him until he came here: now he seemed to see it more clearly. And he had come with the intention of sacrificing himself once more, of giving up natural choice and freedom, and returning his fortune (burdened indeed with himself) to the family from which it had come. It was only now with Miss Jean's mild eyes upon him that he fully realized all this. He kept looking at her, as he played, with close and anxious observation. Not an idea of the light in which she appeared to him was in Miss Jean's mind. That any man should be looking at her with the idea of making her his wife would have startled her beyond expression; but a young man—a youth whom she regarded as not much more than a boy! It is to be feared that Miss Jean's sentiments would have been those of resentment. She would have thought herself insulted. But, happily, there was not in anything around the smallest suggestion of such a purpose. If the ladies of Murkley considered

an intruder dangerous, it was entirely on account of Lilias. To think of themselves never entered their minds; they were beyond all that. They had settled down upon their own unchangeable fortunes with great peace and tranquillity, putting themselves, so far as the hopes and happiness of life were concerned, into Lilias. She was to enjoy for them, to get advancement, to go to court, to have all the delights and honours which they had never known. Generally it is in their children that women thus live by proxy; these maiden sisters felt it a special boon of Providence that, unmarried and without succession as they were in life, they should have this special representative in the new generation. But even Lilias went out of Miss Jean's mind as she listened. She would have liked indeed that Lilias, that all she loved, should be here to share the benefit; but then she was aware that the benefit would have been much less to them. She had, therefore, a reason to herself for enjoying it alone. And the afternoon stole away while this wonderful delight went on. Lewis, though he was the performer, did not lose himself in the music as Miss Jean did. When he stopped at last, she could not speak to him; her eyes were

full of tears. She made him again a little sign with her hand and was silent, waiting until she could come down from that upper region, in which she had been soaring, to common earth. Fortunately at this moment Miss Margaret came in.

'So you have been playing to Jean?' she said; 'that is very amiable and very kind. She is not quite her own woman where music is concerned. I thought it best to leave the treat to her by herself, for I'm not a fanatic as she is. But I am very much obliged to you for giving my sister such a pleasure.'

'The pleasure is,' said Lewis, 'to play to one who feels it so much.'

'I can fancy that,' said Miss Margaret, 'that it is not just all on one side. You are meaning to settle in this country, Mr. Murray? There are many of our name hereabout. We may possibly count kin with you ourselves when we know what family ye are of.'

'I fear not,' Lewis said, shaking his head. He grew pale, and then he grew red. Here was a danger he had not thought of, and what was he to say?

'You must not say that. It is far more likely

than not that we'll find ourselves cousins. All Murrays are sib to Murkley: they say, you know, that all Stuarts are sib to the king. I am not taking such state upon us as all that: the duke, he is the head of the clan: but still Murkley is far ben,' said Miss Margaret, satisfied, but calm. 'Probably, as you've been so long abroad, you are a little astray in your genealogy. I have often remarked that. But tell me your county, and I will tell you what branch you come from.'

Lewis got up from the piano. He was glad to turn his back from the light, to conceal his embarrassment.

'Indeed,' he said, 'I can't tell you even that. My godfather had been long abroad; he spoke little of his people; his money was all in the funds. I knew only him, not his origin.'

'That is very strange,' Miss Margaret said. 'There are no godfathers in our Scotch way; but I would have thought your good father and mother would have been particular about a man's antecedents before they made him responsible.'

'Oh, my father and mother—' said Lewis—he was about to say knew nothing of him, but stopped himself in time—'they died,' he said,

hastily, 'when I was very young, and he took me up, when I had nobody to care for me. It has all been love and kindness on his part, and, I hope, gratitude on mine.'

'Indeed, and I am sure of that,' said Miss Jean. 'Just imagine, Margaret, a young man, not much more than a boy, and he has devoted himself to this old gentleman. It is not many that would do that. He has given up his youth to please him. He has learned to play like *yon* for his sake. He has been a son to him, and more. For my part, I never heard anything like it. He has not a poor mind like yours and mine to inquire was he Murray of this or that; he just loved him, and served him for love's sake. And is not that the best of all?' Miss Jean said. She was still in the rapture of the music she had heard; her heart touched, her eyes wet, her pulses all throbbing in unison. She rose up in her enthusiasm, letting the famous table-cloth drop again and walked on it, unconscious of what she was doing, till she came to the fire, near which her sister had established herself. Miss Jean leant her hand upon the high mantel-piece, which was a narrow shelf of marble, and stood up there, her head relieved against the

white and highly carved pediment. Her tall, slight figure, in its black gown, had a thrill of emotion about it. Miss Margaret, seated at a little distance in the glow of the small, bright fire, looked calm like a judge, listening and deciding, while the other had all the energy of an advocate.

'I am very glad to hear such a fine account of the young gentleman,' she said.

'Your sister takes me on my own evidence,' said Lewis. 'It is only from me she has heard it, and I did not know I was telling her all that. What I told her was that my dear old godfather was old and lonely, and that when I was with him I could not learn to wade in the water and devote myself to fishing like Stormont. It was jealousy made me say so,' cried the young man. 'I thought Stormont looked such a fine fellow risking his life for the trout, and me, I was sorry to get my feet wet. What a difference! and not to my advantage. So, to account for myself, and to be an excuse, I told my story. "Qui s'excuse, s'accuse." I had no right to say anything about it. It was my jealousy, nothing more.'

'You can ring for the tea, Jean,' Miss Mar-

garet said. This was the only decision she delivered, but it was enough. She turned round afterwards and made an elaborate apology for her other sister. 'You will be wondering you do not see Lilias,' she said, 'but she is much occupied; she has a great many things to do. Another time when you come I hope I may present you to her. She is so important to us all that perhaps we are more anxious than we need be. Jean and me, we are two, you see, to take care of her: and she is the chief object of our thoughts.'

'I hope it is not bad health,' Lewis said, 'that makes you anxious.' His idea was that Lilias must be the eldest sister, and perhaps beginning to succumb to the burdens of age.

Miss Margaret gave Miss Jean, who was about to speak, a warning look.

'No,' she said, 'it is not bad health; but there are many things to be taken into account. And here comes Simon with the tea,' she added, in a tone of relief. If there was a mystery on his part, there was a little concealment and conscious deception upon theirs too.

## CHAPTER X.

LEWIS was greatly elated by this easy beginning of his undertaking. Everything had been so new to him in these unknown regions that he did not know how he was to make his way, or whether it would be possible to penetrate into the circle of the ladies of Murkley at all. And now everything was so simple, so natural, that he wondered at his own fears. He was the acquaintance of the whole village, or rather 'the haill toun,' as they called themselves, and before he had been a fortnight in the place was taken for granted as a member of the little community. On the second rainy day he called at the manse, and for politeness sake was asked to play there, and was listened to with bustling attention by Mrs. Seton, while

Katie discreetly yawned behind her work, and Mr. Seton recollected an engagement.

'I'm very sorry,' the minister said, 'but my time is not my own. We ministers are like doctors; we are constantly being called away.'

Lewis was not offended by the good man's excuses, nor by little Katie's weariness. He played them his 'piece,' as Mrs. Seton called it, and then, with a laugh, left the piano. Mrs. Seton thought it was essential to ask him to go on.

'You're not getting up yet, Mr. Murray,' she said. 'Oh, no, no, you mustn't do that. It is just a treat, such as we seldom get. You see, there are few people that can give the time to it. You must have practised a great deal, far more than our young people will take the trouble to do. Oh, you never bound yourself to hours? That must have been because you were so fond of it, and just played on without taking count of the time. Do you hear that, Katie? That is what you ought to do, if you would ever be a performer like Mr. Murray. Just let him hear you play that last thing of yours. Well, it is not like what Mr. Murray can do, of course, but it is not at all bad for a little thing like

you; and very likely Mr. Murray could give you a hint or two. A hint is sometimes of such consequence. Toots! just get up at once. When you have to be pressed, and coaxed, and all that, people expect something very grand. Now, in your simple way, you should just do it at once, and nobody would criticise.'

'But Mr. Murray doesn't want to hear me play. He plays far better—oh, so much better—himself,' cried Katie.

'Just never you mind that,' said her mother. 'Do your best, nobody can do more. When you are as old as me, you will know that the best judges are always the ones that are least hard to please. Just go at once, Katie. Perhaps you will tell her what you see particularly wrong, Mr. Murray,' she added, as the girl reluctantly obeyed. 'Unfortunately, we can get so little advantage of masters here. I am always telling Mr. Seton we must give her a winter in Edinburgh, just to get into the ways of the world a little; for you cannot do that here—oh, no, no, you just can't get that in the country. You must see people, and see how they behave. But a clergyman has such a difficulty in getting away, unless he really

falls ill, or something of that kind; and it would be going too far, you know, to wish for that. I think myself sometimes that I see signs of over work, but Mr. Seton will not hear of it—he just will not hear of it. Katie, Katie, that's a great deal too quick. Do you not think that was too fast, Mr. Murray? Dear, dear! you must always count, you must not trust to your ear; and don't be so strong upon the pedals, Katie. That was a little better. Take care of the time, and the tune will take care of itself. La—la—la-la-la—la,' sang the anxious mother, accom panying with waving hand and head the some what uncertain performance.

Lewis was so sympathetic that he was quite conscious of Katie's indignation, and shame-facedness, and blinding embarrassment, as well as of the humour of her mother's remarks, which ran on all the time. He got up after a little while and went and stood behind the young performer.

'Don't be frightened,' he said, in an under-tone. 'If you will play more slowly, and not lose your head, you will do very well. I used to lose my head, too, and make a dreadful mess of it when I was your age.'

'I mean to stop at the end of the first bit,' said Katie, in the same undertone, with a defiant glance. 'As you did the other day.'

'At the end of the andante?' said Lewis. 'Yes, that will be best.'

The girl looked up at him this time with astonishment. It is one thing to say that you intend to break off in a performance, but quite another when your audience acquiesces in this rebellion.

'I thought you were so fond of it,' Katie could not help saying, with a little pique. So fond of it that he would have liked to prolong her performance! Lewis laughed inwardly, but outside preserved his decorum.

'When you play without your will, it is no longer in harmony,' he said. 'However you may be correct, it will never sound so. When you take away the consent of the heart, the chords do not strike just—you understand?'

Katie stared at him, while her fingers stumbled over the keys. She was profoundly astonished, but she was not stupid, and more or less the girl did understand.

They were left to each other, while Mrs. Seton rose to receive a visitor, and Lewis

seized the opportunity of the first break to substitute conversation for music. He gave her a ludicrous account of himself in the rain.

'If you had seen me, you would have despised me,' he said. 'How glad I am we met only in the village, and not on the river-side! When I met you I was like one of the fowls, with all my feathers drooping, don't you know, longing to get under a cart, as they did.'

'Oh, Mr. Murray!' cried Katie, with a broken giggle. She had thought so, but to assent to this description of himself was quite against the code of morals inculcated at the manse.

'Oh, it is very true,' said Lewis, with his cordial laugh. 'You scoffed at my umbrella, but when it is wet one always carries an umbrella where I come from. Ah, but there was worse than the umbrella, Miss Katie. Is it permitted that I should say Miss Katie?'

'Oh, yes,' said Katie, with a little blush—'everybody does it here: though I am the eldest,' she added, with a little dignity.

'Abroad,' said Lewis, with the smile which he always permitted himself when he used that vague term, 'we say mademoiselle, or Fräulein, or signorina. I know that miss is a little differ-

ent in English. But I wander from my subject. When I got to the river, I felt what you call small, Miss Katie. There was Stormont in the middle of the stream—he I thought a little languid the other day, not taking much interest—'

'Oh, but that is a mistake,' cried Katie, with a vivid blush; 'it is just that we're quiet in Scotland—we think quiet manners the best. Oh, he takes a great interest——' and here she stopped embarrassed; for why, indeed, should she take upon herself to respond for young Stormont? She gave an anxious glance at Lewis, lest he should laugh, or perhaps indulge in a little banter on the subject, which was not foreign to the manners of the countryside. But Lewis was perfectly serious, and answered her with the air of a judge.

'Of course, I was mistaken in that. There he was in the middle of the river, like a young Hercules, glowing and fresh, while I was so sodden and drooping. If you had heard me laugh at myself! "What a poor creature you are!" I said, "not fit for this robust country at all, thinking that your feet will get wet, that the grass is soaking, while he is there enjoying himself—actually enjoying himself!"'

'Oh, yes,' cried Katie, proud and pleased, 'it was grand for the fishing. He had such a basket of fish. One was seven pounds, they said. Mr. Stormont called on his way home just to tell papa what sport he had had,' she added in explanation, 'and that was how I know.'

Lewis was not insensible to the fact that to call at the manse, which was on the right side of the river, on his way to the Tower, which was on the left, was a peculiar short cut for young Stormont to make: but he accepted every detail with perfect gravity.

'I,' he said, with his apologetic air and his cheerful laugh at himself, 'basely took advantage of Adam's skill, and got some of his fish to carry to the Castle. I did not pretend I had caught them myself—I was not quite so base as that. But Adam, too, how much he was my superior! To see him there, all brown and strong, casting his rod, the rain raining upon him, and little brooks running off his hat and his clothes. How shall I make myself like that, Miss Katie? I am only a carpet knight—I am not good for anything here.'

'Oh, Mr. Murray!' repeated little Katie. She was shocked with herself not to be able to find

something consolatory, something gratifying to say. At length she ventured, timidly and against her conscience, to bring forward arguments in his defence against himself. 'You can play such beautiful music, such hard things—and no gentleman hereabouts can do that; and you know a great many languages.'

'That is no credit to me,' Lewis said. 'I could not help learning them—when I was a child and knew no better,' he added, with a laugh.

'We are awfully backward in languages,' Katie said. 'We had a German governess for a while, but I never could learn it. And as for the gentlemen, they never try. After all, it is not so much wanted, do you think, unless you sing, to teach you how to pronounce the words? that is what mamma says. If you sing, you must learn how to say your words; they are always either Italian or German, or at the least French.'

'That is very important,' said Lewis, gravely; 'and perhaps to know what the words mean: that would help you to the appropriate expression.'

'Oh, I don't mind so much about that,' said

Katie; 'it's rather old-fashioned to put expression into them. Mamma is old-fashioned; she gives her head a little nod, and she turns it like this, and she smiles at the funny parts—I don't mean really funny, you know, for of course she never sings comic songs, but at the parts where you would smile if you were talking. But you don't do that now; it is *quite* old-fashioned, my music-mistress says.'

'Oh, it is quite old-fashioned?' said Lewis.

'Quite. Miss Jean is even worse than mamma. Sometimes you would think she was going to cry. Perhaps you never heard her sing? Oh, it is only the old Scotch things she sings; but some people think a great deal of them. Mamma sings them sometimes too. I don't care for them myself. What I should like best would be the German, if you were quite sure that you pronounced the words right.'

'So far as that goes, I might perhaps be of use.'

'Oh, would you, Mr. Murray? That would be so very kind. If I only knew how to pronounce them right, I would not care for anything else.'

'Not this morning, Miss Katie; but you might

be singing something you would not like to utter——'

Katie looked at him for a moment with surprise, then she added, lightly,

'What could it matter? Nobody understands.'

By this time several callers had arrived, and Mrs. Seton's monologue, with occasional interruptions, was heard from the other end of the room. Mrs. Stormont was one of the visitors, and Miss Jean another; but, though the former lady was a formidable obstacle, the quickly flowing tide of speech from the minister's wife carried all before it.

'Oh, yes, yes,' she said, 'that's just what I always say. If it's not good for the country in one way, it is in another; it keeps down the insects and things, and, if it's bad for the hay, it's excellent for the turnips. And, besides, it's the Almighty's will, which is the best reason after all. Sometimes it's very good for us just to be dull, and put up with it—that's what I tell the children often. Oh, yes, yes; no doubt it's hard to convince young things of what doesn't please them, but it's true for all that. There are plenty of dull moments in life besides the wet days, and we must just put up with

them. Mr. Philip brought us a beautiful present of trout just the other day; the big one, what was it it weighed, Katie?—six pounds? Yes, yes, six pounds. A lovely fish—I never saw a finer. I was unwilling to take it, though that seemed ungracious. I just said, "Toots, Mr. Philip, not me this time; you're always so kind to the manse—you should send this to some greater person."'

'I did not know,' said Mrs. Stormont, with very distinct enunciation, 'that my son had got anything so considerable. The biggest one he brought home was four pounds; but at Philip's age it's seldom that the best wins as far as home.'

'Dear me!' cried Mrs. Seton. 'Now that was scarcely nice of Mr. Philip. I told him it was a present fit for a greater stranger; but he's just very liberal-minded, and has a great respect for Mr. Seton, which is so good for a young man. For I always say you can't have a safer friend than your minister; but, if I had thought he was depriving you of it, I would just have scolded him well. No, no, that's not my way of thinking; it should always be the best for home —oh! yes, the best should be for home. It's

very fine to be generous, but the best should always be for home. I often say to the children——'

'Young men and their families seldom agree on that subject,' said Mrs. Stormont. 'Is it true, Miss Jean, the grand story I hear about Margaret and you and little Lilias all going up to London next spring? Bless me, that will be a terrible affair. I know what it is to go through a season in London; I did it once, and only once, myself. I said to my husband, "We'll just be ruined," and I would never hear of doing it again.'

'It would not be for us,' said Miss Jean, 'but for Lilias; you see, at her age—and Margaret is of the opinion that we should give her every justice; besides, we would not stay all the season, just enough to give her a good idea; and then, you see, being once presented, she would be prepared for whatever might happen.'

'We all know what that means,' said Mrs. Seton, nodding her head. 'Oh, yes, yes, it is very natural. When you have the charge of young people, you must look on into the future. I am always telling Mr. Seton, Katie must have a winter in Edinburgh; that will be season

enough for her, for you are never rightly at your ease in society till you have seen something of the world.'

'For my part, I think there's far better society in Edinburgh than you can get in London,' said Mrs. Stormont. 'You get the best in the one place, but it's a very different class you get in the other. A good Scots family counts for nothing among all those fashionable folk. You are asked at the tail-end of one of their great parties, and your friends think they have done their duty by you. No, no, London's not for me.'

'That may be very true,' said Miss Jean, 'but Margaret is of the opinion that this is the right thing to do; and she always strives to carry out what she thinks to be right.'

'It's just the most terrible waste of money,' Mrs. Stormont continued. 'I never think you get half so much for a gold sovereign as you do for a pound note; and if you ask your way in the street, or stroke a bairn on the head as you pass it, there's sixpence to pay. And the beer! nobody but wants beer. How they can stand all that cold stuff on their stomachs is a mystery to me.'

'Mr. Seton maintains it's not so bad as a

dram,' said the minister's wife. 'Oh! no, no, if you come to think of it, it is not so bad as the drams. Whisky is far worse for their stomachs. If the one's cold, the other just burns them up. I set my face against it, but it's so little you can do. And sixpence goes a far way in beer; you can always hope he'll not drink it all, but take home the half to his wife. Ah, no, you must not speak against London. It's a grand place London. You see the best of everything there. When we go up now and then, which is not nearly so often as I should wish, we have no cause to complain of our friends. They are just as pleased to see us as we are to see them, and we must dine with this one, and the other will take us to the Academy, or into the park, or to hear a concert. You would be happy there with the music, Mr. Murray. The best always goes to London. Oh! yes, yes, in London there is the best of everything.'

'And the worst,' said Mrs. Stormont, emphatically, as she rose. She paused to shake hands with Lewis with a certain demonstration of interest. 'You are going to settle down in our neighbourhood?' she said. 'I'm sure I'm very glad to hear it. There's no better situation that

I know of. You're near the moors for the shooting, and close to the river for the fishing, and what could heart of man desire more?'

'Unfortunately I am not much of a sportsman.'

'Well, well, there are other attractions,' said Mrs. Stormont, with unusual geniality. 'We can supply you with better things. A nice house and pleasant neighbours, and a bonnie Scots lassie for a wife, if that is within your requirements. Men are scarce, and you may pick and choose.'

'Not quite so bad as that, I hope,' said Mrs. Seton, with a heightened colour. 'No, no, not so bad as that; but still, no doubt, there are some fine girls.'

'Some! there are dozens,' said the other, with an evident meaning which Lewis, surprised, did not fathom; 'and take you my word, Mr. Murray, you are in a grand position. You have nothing to do but pick and choose.'

Miss Jean rose up quickly when this was said. She was nervous and alarmed by every trumpet of battle. She hastily interposed, with her softer voice.

'I must be going, Mrs. Seton. We will soon, I hope, see you at the castle; and Katie knows

how welcome she is. No, no, you'll never mind coming to the door. Here is Mr. Murray will see me out,' cried Miss Jean, eager to be absent from the fray.

Mrs. Stormont, however, had delivered her shaft, and it was she who led the way, with a smile of satisfied malice.

'You must really settle among us. You must not just tantalise the young ladies,' she said.

When she had been placed in her pony-carriage and driven away, Lewis took the opportunity thus presented to him, and accompanied Miss Jean, somewhat to her alarm, into the park through the little wicket. Miss Jean was still a little nervous, with a tremor of agitation about her.

'Did you ever hear anything like *yon?*' she said. 'It was very ill-bred. You see Mrs. Stormont is a person of strong feelings. That is always the excuse Margaret makes for her. But you may disapprove of a thing, surely, and show it in a way becoming a gentlewoman, without going so far as that.'

'What is it,' asked Lewis, always full of interest in his fellow-creatures, 'which this lady does not approve?'

'There are great allowances to be made for her,' said Miss Jean. 'You see Philip is her only son, and naturally, if he marries at all, she would like him to look higher. The Setons are very nice people. I would not have you think anything different; but it would not be wonderful that she should like him to look higher.'

'I see; then it is Mrs. Seton who has arranged to marry her daughter to——'

'Oh, you must not take that into your head. Bless me! I would not say that: it may never come the length of marrying; it is just that Philip is always hanging about the manse. And Katie, she is very young, poor thing, and fond of her amusement—they may mean nothing, for anything I can tell; and that is Margaret's opinion,' Miss Jean said, with trepidation. 'Margaret has always said it was nothing but a little nonsense and flirtation between the young folk.'

'It is the fashion of England,' said Lewis, 'I suppose—but it is strange to me, too, as to Mrs. Stormont—that Miss Katie should manage her own concerns.'

'I know little about the fashions of England,' said Miss Jean, slightly annoyed by this answer,

'but in Scotland it is not our way to arrange these sort of things; when they come of themselves, we have just to put up with it, if we don't like it, or to be thankful, if we do. It is more natural than that French way of arranging—which comes to nothing but harm, as I have often heard.'

Lewis did not stand up in defence of the French way. He said,

'Miss Katie is too young, she will think that is play; but when it is otherwise, when the lady is one who knows what is in the world, and what it is to choose, and understands what she would wish in the companion of her life——'

Here Miss Jean began to shake her head, and laugh softly to herself.

'Where will you find a young creature that will be so wise as that?' she said.

'Perhaps I was not thinking of a young creature,' said Lewis, piqued a little by her laugh.

'Ah,' said Miss Jean, 'that is just another of your French ways. I have heard that in their very stories it will be an elder person, a widow perhaps, that will be the heroine. That's a thing which is very repulsive to the like of us

in this country. You will perhaps think I am very romantic, but I like none of your unnatural stories. What I like is two young folk, not very wise perhaps, mistaken it may be, but with honest hearts towards one another, faithful and true; that is what I like to hear of—and no parents interfering, except just to guide a little, and help them on.'

'Ah!' said Lewis, with an involuntary sigh, 'that is one way, to be sure; but must all other ways be unnatural? Might it not be that the elder person, as you say, should have a charm greater than the younger, should be more sweet in some one's eyes, kinder and truer? All romance is not of one kind.'

'I cannot abide,' said Miss Jean, severely, 'the woman that can begin over again, and tag a new life on to the tail of another. No, I cannot 'bide that. It may be one of my old-fashioned ways: but to everything there is a season, as Solomon, in his wisdom, was instructed to say.'

'That is different,' said Lewis; 'but do you think, then, that the heart grows old? I have known some who were as fresh as any young girl, or even as a child, though they were not what you call young.'

'Well, well!' said Miss Jean, with a smile and a sigh, 'I will say nothing against that. I'll allow it's true. Oh, yes; but you're a clever young man to discern it. It is just ridiculous,' she continued, bursting into a little laugh, 'the young feeling that—some persons have; wrinkles and grey hairs outside, and just the foolish feeling within, as if you were still a bit foolish lamb upon the lee.'

Miss Jean laughed, but there was a little moisture in her eyes.

'You have neither wrinkles nor grey hairs,' said the audacious Lewis. 'You choose to be old, but you are not old. Your eyes are as young as Miss Katie's, your heart is more soft and kind. Why there should be anything unnatural in a romance that had you for its centre I cannot see.'

'Me!'

Miss Jean stood still in her astonishment; a soft colour passed over her gentle countenance, not so much with the emotion appropriate to the occasion, as with wonder and amazement. It was a moment before she fully realized what he meant to say, and then—

'Bless the laddie! is he going out of his senses,' she cried. 'Me!'

'And why not? I cannot see any reason,' Lewis said. He was always ingratiating, anxious to please, seeking with a smiling anxiety for the sympathy of his companions. He looked at her now with a tender desire to set her right with herself. A respectful admiration was in his eyes; and indeed, as he looked with the strong desire which he had to find out all that was best in the modest, gentle countenance before him, it was astonishing how pretty Miss Jean began to grow. The faded colour grew sweeter and brighter, the eyes enlarged, the very contour of the face became more perfect. He could not help saying to himself that careful dressing, and a little stir and excitement, would make her handsome; and as for her age, what did a few years matter? Lewis said to himself that he had no prejudices. When a man of forty marries a woman of twenty-five, there is not a word to be said—and why should there be any difference in this case? All this was written in his eyes, had Miss Jean been clever enough to see it there. But she was not. She considered that he was trying to please her, and make her satisfied with herself, as a child sometimes does who cannot bear to think that its

mother or aunt is supposed old. Perhaps it pleased her as even the child's naïve compliment pleases. She shook her head.

'You are very kind,' she said, 'to try to make me think that age is as good as youth. But I'm not wishing to be young—I am quite content, and there is no question of that. What I was wanting to say was that I would never be the one to cross two young things in an attachment.' A pretty colour was on Miss Jean's face; she blushed a little for the sake of the imaginary young people. 'I would not part them—who can ever tell what may come of it?—I would not part them,' she said, with fervour.

Lewis felt a warm glow under his waistcoat, and thought with a little complacency that he was falling in love with Miss Jean as she spoke.

## CHAPTER XI.

KATIE SETON was not yet seventeen, but she was the eldest of her family, which has a maturing influence, and she had been the chief personage in a series of impromptu performances in the manse drawing-room, like the one at which the reader has assisted, almost as long as she could remember; so that she was familiar enough with ideas which are generally beginning to develop at seventeen, and had flirted very innocently ever since she was in short frocks. From that time Philip Stormont had been her favourite partner, her closest attendant. He was the one who walked home with her when they met at the tea-parties of the neighbourhood, following with Katie behind her father and mother in the strictest decorum, when his protection was altogether unnecessary,

and finding his way to the manse on any excuse; and there are so many excuses in the country for such visits. Sometimes he had business with the minister which kept him waiting for hours, much deplored by Mrs. Seton, who would bustle out and in, and lament her occupations, which did not permit her to remain with him, and her husband's absence, which wasted his day.

'But I've sent little Robbie to see if he can find his father, and, Katie, you must just do the best you can to wile away the time,' Mrs. Seton would say.

Katie did her very best on such occasions. She would give the young man a lesson in dancing, in which she was acknowledged to be the greatest proficient for miles round, or she would go over one song after another, playing the tune with one hand to teach it to him, sometimes guiding him with her own pretty little voice, sometimes breaking down in rills of young laughter at his mistakes, in which he would join. They were on such perfectly easy terms that his mistakes did not trouble him before Katie—he even went wrong on purpose to make her laugh. Sometimes they would meet out of doors and walk together, the younger

children who accompanied Katie following their own devices, to the satisfaction of all parties, as soon as it was realised that Stormont had appeared, and that the previous attendants were free. In this way a great many passages had occurred, unknown, indeed, to father and mother, and in themselves bearing but little meaning, which had so linked these two young creatures together that neither one nor the other could identify themselves apart.

There had been nothing said between them about engagement or marriage, but they felt a mutual right to pout and quarrel, if Katie danced with some one else more than civility required, or if Philip walked home with Annie Borrodaile. Annie Borrodaile was the individual whom Katie had chosen to erect into a dangerous rival, while Philip, on his side, after a marked identification of young Mr. Dunlop the assistant at Braehead had lately fallen upon Lewis as his antagonist. They would taunt each other with these supposed preferences, in which neither believed, but up to this time nothing had happened, nothing had been said to make a reference to papa necessary on Katie's part, or to give Mr. Philip that right 'to

put a stop to' a certain acquaintance, which he constantly declared to be necessary. They were playing with the gravity of the matter, and thinking that nobody saw clearer than themselves. But how was it possible that any-one could see so clearly as Philip's mother, who had no one but he, and who was a widow, with her mind and thoughts continually following her son. Somehow, no one could quite tell how, and herself least of all, Mrs. Stormont got to know what her son did; where he walk-ed; how often he met Katie; how often he was received in the manse drawing-room. None of these things were done clandestinely; the servants, the children, the neighbours, all had a part in the proceedings of the young people, who themselves were as honestly void of offence as ever young people were.

On the evening of the day on which Mrs. Stormont had made the visit we have recorded, Katie went out with her young brothers and sisters. Robbie and Jock were the next to her in age. They were fifteen and thirteen, and full of mischief, as indeed, if boys are not at their age, what is to become of them? Rosie and Minnie were younger; they were little girls

who had an eye to what was going on, and were deeply aware that, if anything could make Katie indifferent to the fact that they had taken off their shoes and stockings, and were wading on the edge of the river like the boys, or had scrambled up into a tree, and there sat dangling their small legs with absolute insensibility to decorum, it was the sight of Philip coming vaguely along whistling one of the tunes Katie had taught him, and looking about everywhere to find her out. These young people offered no obstacles to Philip's search: they aided him indeed with all their powers. The direction in which they usually took their evening walk was up the water, a path which ended in a wood stretching downwards from the big, empty, unfinished house of Murkley to the riverside. This wood was their favourite resort. There were rabbits in it, and squirrels; there were oaks all twisted and gnarled, which were delightful to climb, and in which the girls found no difficulty. There was a large willow very near the bend of the river, with great branches stretching half way across the stream, upon which they would sit and fish, perched up like a bird among the foliage, and out of everybody's

way. And there was an old quarry of red earth full of pebbles, in which nothing was so easy, if wilder sports failed them, as to establish a shop, and sell mimic sweets and fruits, pretending to be customers and pretending to be saleswomen, to their hearts' desire. This latter delight was best attainable by the girls when May came too, who was only eight, and who thought nothing so delightful as playing shop. Meanwhile, the boys would be after the rabbits, or investigating the nests.

The party had set out from the manse in very good order as usual. Katie had been 'upset' during the day, and her mother had petted and consoled her. There had been no direct confidences between them. Mrs. Seton had made little reference to the personal offence, though she had felt it keenly.

'It was not pretty. Oh, no, it was not pretty,' she said, 'to speak like yon to poor Mr. Murray, a young lad that is a stranger here, and knows nobody's character. If he had known what kind of woman Mrs. Stormont was—fond of making these kind of remarks—he would of course have understood. But, no, no, indeed it was not pretty, and it should just read us a lesson,

Katie, to mind how we indulge our fancies, not thinking of other people. It was not, maybe, civil either to you or me; but we know what she is, and we never mind—no, no, we just never mind. But I feel for poor Mr. Murray,' Mrs. Seton said.

As for Katie, she said, with anger,

'What right had she to speak like that? as if we were wanting him, or anyone.'

'Tut,' said her mother, 'it was not us she was meaning. She just can't help being disagreeable; it is her way.'

But Katie had been angry, and consequently 'upset' and wretched all the day. It was at her mother's request that she went out with her brothers and sisters. Mrs. Seton thought the air would do her good.

'Now, Robin and Jock, you will take care of Katie,' their mother said. 'Play none of your pliskies, but just walk by her side like two gentlemen, and take care of her, poor thing; and, Rosie and Minnie, you are not to drag and hang upon Katie, but let her get a little quiet and fresh air. Take a nice walk, and you'll be better when you come back.'

The party set off very solemnly with their

charge—they respected their mother at least, so far as they could be seen from the manse windows, if not a little further. Rosie and Minnie walked in front like two little judges, and Robbie and Jock were on either side of their sister, walking, 'like two gentlemen,' in quiet gravity and state. Katie, between them, had a languid air. She walked with her head drooping a little, with a pensive seriousness in her countenance. It was impressive to see this fine family taking the air. Till they took the turn to the river-side their seriousness was unbroken. Then nature began to assert itself. Robbie and Jock were startled into animation by the sudden sight of a water-rat, after which Vixen, their dog, without consulting them, but with a glance out of his shag of hair contemptuous and impatient as who should say, 'You laggards, come on,' had turned in full pursuit. Rosie and Minnie persevered a little longer.

'It's nothing but a rat! but boys will rin for naething!' said Miss Rosie, more contemptuous than Vixen. A minute or two after, they thought they saw a squirrel, and flew along the path. Katie grew a little less languid when she was thus left alone. She said to herself that the

air had done her good already. She did not call back the boys, as she had once thought of doing, or summon the little girls, who were within reach of her voice. What was the use when here was Philip Stormont coming? He was more of her own age, she said to herself, and more a companion, and there could be no doubt that he too, as well as the young Setons, was wonderfully fond of that road by the river-side. It can no more be denied that she was glad to see him approaching than that she had confidently expected his appearance; but the first sight of him suddenly gave Katie's little soul a perverse turn, and she received him without her usual cordiality, with a preternaturally grave face.

'I have often wondered,' she said, 'what brings you out at this hour, and on this side of the water. It is nothing for us, because we don't dine, and we have had our tea; but I have just been thinking what becomes of your dinner, and you walking about all the evening. You must be awfully fond of walking,' Katie said, looking up, with the profoundest air of philosophical inquiry on her face.

'Walking! It is perhaps something else I am fond of,' said Philip.

'Something else? I never see you with your fishing-rod,' proceeded Katie; 'but that does not matter, for of course you have your own reasons. But what happens about your dinner, if you dine at seven o'clock?'

'We don't dine at seven o'clock. Who would go in, a night like this, for a dull dinner? No, I have just something when I go home: and in the meantime I see you.'

'Oh, me!—that's not much consequence,' said Katie; and then she added, 'I know now why Mrs. Stormont was not pleased, if she has to take her dinner by herself. I would not stand it, if I were your mother. I wonder what you mean, all you boys. Do you think you are so much grander than women are, that you turn everything upside down for your own pleasure? Oh! if I were your mother, I would be worse than vexed! I would just not put up with it,' cried Katie, stamping her small foot. The object of this assault was petrified. He looked at her with a gasp of dismay.

'How do you know,' he blundered out at last, 'that my mother was angry? You know I don't think myself grand at all nor anything worth

speaking of,' he added, in a deprecating tone. 'It is you, Katie, that are angry.'

'And I have cause, Mr. Stormont,' said Katie, with dignity.

'Mr. Stormont! Is it a quarrel, then? You are always wanting to quarrel with me,' he said, in a tone of complaint, yet conciliation; 'but it takes two to do that. What is it now?'

'Oh, it is nothing,' cried Katie; 'if unkind things are said about me, it is none of your affair. I am not complaining. It is a little strange, however,' she said, after an effective pause, 'that because a gentleman does not go in at the right hour and eat his dinner as he ought, a girl that has nothing to do with him, that is no connection, should be abused in her own mother's house.'

'Is it me that you have nothing to do with?' said Philip, piteously. 'I think nobody can have so hard a heart.'

'What have I to do with you, Mr. Philip?—we are just friends. You are friends with a great many people. There are the Borrodailes—'

'I knew that was coming,' said Philip, 'though I tell you six times a day that Annie Borrodaile is nothing——'

'I said not a word about Annie Borrodaile. It is just a guilty conscience that makes you name one more than another. And why should you tell me six times a day? I wonder what I have got to do with it?'

'Katie,' cried poor Philip, 'how can you speak to me so, when you know just as well as I do that there's no one in the world I care about but you? You have got everything to do with me. You know, if all the ladies in the world were here, it is you I would choose; you know it is for you I come here; you know I think of nobody else and nothing else.' Here Philip, approaching humbly, endeavoured to draw into his own Katie's hand, which lay within reach upon her lap, for by this time the pair had seated themselves, as they usually did, upon a fallen tree which lay conveniently within reach of the road, but sheltered by the brushwood. 'Nobody else, and nothing else,' said Philip, drawing closer.

'Except the trout,' said Katie, with a laugh, 'and birds in the season, and the hunting, and the curling, and two or three hundred things, not to speak of Annie Borrodaile.'

To this Philip made no reply. He was

wounded, and withdrew a little to the other end of the tree. It was a scene which had been played a great many times, and they were both quite familiar with it: but it was always new to them, and always threatened for ten minutes at least a tragical severance, which, however, happily never came.

'That, however, is nothing to me,' said Katie; 'but when your mother comes and speaks as if —oh, as if I were the dust beneath her feet—as if I were nobody that had ever been heard of before—as if I were a girl that could be bought in the market like a slave in the "Arabian Nights"——'

'Katie, for goodness sake tell me what she said!'

Katie continued to play with his curiosity for some time longer, until she had worked that and her own indignation into a tragic heat; then, with tears of youthful fury and injured feeling in her eyes, she unfolded her wrongs.

'Mr. Murray was there—he had come to play his piece to mamma—and Mrs. Stormont turned round and looked me straight in the face, and said to him that he must settle in Murkley. "You'll get a nice house," she said, "and a

wife; you can pick and choose among the young ladies—oh, yes, you can take your choice of them," and she looked at me—all the time she looked at me! She just offered me—as if she had any business with me!—to that man that is not a man, that can do nothing but fiddle on the piano,' cried Katie, transported by her wrongs and her indignation. She even cried a little—hot tears, out of pity for herself and the sense of injury which swelled all her youthful veins.

Philip on his side was greatly relieved to find that it was no worse. What he had feared was that his mother had interfered definitely in his own affairs. His mind was greatly eased when he heard the extent of her transgressions. He ventured upon a short laugh under his moustache.

'That was so like my mother,' he said.

'It may have been very like your mother, Mr. Stormont,' cried Katie, 'but if you think that I am going to put up with it—and mamma too!'

'Was Mrs. Seton angry?' said Philip. 'Don't call me Mr. Stormont. Now just reflect; I have nothing to do with it; I did not make my

mother. Was Mrs. Seton angry?—what did Mrs. Seton say? If you think my mother ill-tempered, Katie, I know that your mother is kind. What did she say?'

'Oh,' said Katie, softened, 'she said nothing at all. She said that to go out for a walk would do me good. She did not say a word; she just said it was Mrs. Stormont's way.'

'I don't think it is her way,' said Philip, piqued a little; 'but it *was* like my mother,' he added, 'oh, yes, it was like her. She would wish to snatch you away under my very nose, and marry you to another man before I knew what she was doing. Oh, that is just what she would like to try. She would think it was no harm to you.'

'And what business had she with me at all?' cried Katie, but more gently, the storm having had its way.

'Well, I suppose she guesses what you know so well,' said the young lover, 'and that is what you are to me, Katie: that there is nobody but you for me: that I would not care if all the world was swept away so long as I had you safe: that——'

'Oh, that is just your way of talking,' said Katie, but she did not withdraw her hand;

'that is just your nonsense. As if it was likely the world would be swept away, and me left! But that is no reason, if you do like me, that she should think ill of me. I have done nothing to her—why should she be so cruel to me?'

'I am all she has, you see,' said Philip, 'and she does not like to give me up, as she will have to do.'

'I am sure I am not wanting you,' cried Katie. 'She is welcome to keep you to herself for me; besides, if it was not me, it would be somebody else,' she added, after a moment, reflectively, with a philosophy that poor Mrs. Stormont would have done well to emulate. 'At your age you are sure to have somebody. She ought to mind that. If it was Annie Borrodaile, would she be better pleased? Most likely,' said Katie, 'it will be Annie Borrodaile after all.'

It was when Philip was employed in energetic disposal of this hypothesis, which it was her pleasure to fling at him whenever the liveliness of the conversation flagged, that Lewis Murray, emerging from the woods of Murkley, in which he had been wandering, thinking over his own urgent affairs, approached the waterside. He came down from behind the scaur by

a path half overgrown with tall beeches and brushwood, which was little used. The path was clothed with mosses and covered with the brown beech-wort and the slippery droppings of the firs, and a footstep was scarcely audible upon it. In the hollow of the scaur the little girls were playing, the redness of the earth throwing up their small active figures as they performed their little mimicry of life, 'pretending' to be grown-up actors in it, their voices sounding clear into the echoes. At a distance the boys were shouting to each other, and Vixen barking, all of them after the water-rat which had not yet been exhausted as a possibility of fun.

Lewis looked at the children with ready pleasure and sympathy, without thinking of anything further. He was just about to call to them, when a lower murmur of voices caught his ear. He was still on a higher level than the angle of the little wood where it ran down to the river, and, as he glanced in the direction of this softer sound, the young pair became apparent to him. They were close together now, bending towards each other, making but one shadow. Philip's head was uncovered, the light

catching its vigorous reddish-brown, and Katie's blue frock made a little background for the group as Lewis looked down upon them, separating that spot from the brown of the tree's trunk and the green of the foliage. A spectator may be pardoned for looking a moment at such a scene before he makes his presence known, especially when he comes upon it by surprise. Lewis stood still in a passion of soft sympathy and emotion which he himself did not quite understand. In some things he was younger than his age. He had known none of the innocent emotions of boy and girl; darker and less lovely episodes he had heard of in plenty, but fortunately for him his absorption in the life of an old man, kind as his patron had been, had kept him apart from all such seductions, and it had never been within his possibilities to fall sweetly and innocently in love, according to what was the course of nature with Katie and Philip.

He gazed at them as they sat together with a sudden comprehension, a curious self-compassion and sense of envy. He laughed to himself softly, so softly that it did not sound in the quiet evening air, with that amusement which is everybody's first impulse at sight of a pair of

lovers: and then he grew suddenly grave. This was very different from what he was contemplating for himself. He had thought of duty, not of happiness, in all his recent plans. It had been a something incumbent upon him to fulfil, a wrong to atone for, a blunder to set right that had been his inspiration. Perhaps his foreign breeding was responsible for the fact that Lewis had not looked upon the marriage which he thought it right to make as having much to do with his happiness at all. It was a portion of life, a necessity, like another, to be accepted manfully, but not the great and crowning want of youth, not the turning-point of existence. Romance was not in it to his straightforward views: and he was not unwilling to accept Miss Jean for the partner of his life, even had she been less pleasant than he found her. He would have approached even Miss Margaret in the same spirit, and with the same dauntless simplicity, had that been the right thing to do, and would have done his duty by either without any sense of hardship or even regret. But when he saw Philip Stormont and Katie, something awoke in him which was like a new sense. Oh, yes, he had heard of love, he had read of it;

there was not a novel without it, and scarcely a song. He had seen lovers before now. But somehow this soft and lingering eve, the novelty of all around him, the resolution he had taken, even the satirical advice of Mrs. Stormont, and her suggestion that he had but to pick and choose, were all working together in his mind.

Suddenly it occurred to him that here was the something more which was in life, which he had never known, which he had been vaguely conscious of, but never laid hold upon, or even divined. He laughed, and then he grew grave. He took in at a glance all the points of the situation, which were so different from any of his experiences. It is to be feared that Lewis was somewhat shocked by the facts of the case. He thought that Katie ought not to have been here meeting her lover, and he divined that it was a meeting which took place daily, and that it was to both of them the chief feature in the twenty-four hours. But it was something which would never be his. He stood very gravely, and looked down upon the group for a moment more. His wooing would not be like this; it would be all orderly, decorous, calm. He would be kind, always tender, respectful, friendly

to the lady whom he married. It was not in him to fail in the regard which would be her due. But this was another thing altogether. After he had laughed, he sighed. Nature in him had made a mute protest. He looked wistfully and with an irrepressible envy at the lovers. The lovers! As for himself, that was a character which he was never likely to bear. His first idea had been to make his presence known, to warn them of his coming, that they might not be caught by his sudden appearance, or feel themselves found out. But the result of this strange, new impression upon Lewis was that, after that pause, he turned back, and went away out of sight into the woods again, and, after a long *détour*, found his way by another path back to the village. A sort of awe and wistful admiration was in his mind. He would not have them know that anybody had surprised their secret. This tender delicacy of sentiment was untouched by the fact that he thought the meeting wrong. But, wrong or right, it was something which was beyond him, something which he should never know or share.

'Poor Murray; if he were to take my mo-

ther's advice, you would think no more of breaking his heart, if he has a heart——' Philip was saying, as Lewis stole quietly away.

'How can you tell that? He is very nice. He waltzes a great deal better than you do, though I have tried so hard to teach you my step. And if you had only heard him play his piece to mamma! If he were to take your mother's advice—perhaps I would take her advice too.'

'And I'll tell you what I should do, Katie; pitch him into the Witch's Cauldron, which is the deepest hole in the water. Play his piece! It would do him a great deal of good to play his pieces there.'

And they both laughed, all unconscious of his observation, as they rose from their rustic seat unwillingly, and went lingeringly back towards the manse, and the world, out of that enchanted wood. The children had been faintly called half a dozen times before, but now Katie's voice had a tone in it which they felt to convey a real command. The little girls followed slowly; the boys sped on before. It was the recognized way in which, as far as the ferry, where Philip's path struck off, the procession moved towards home.

## CHAPTER XII.

AFTER the conversation with Miss Jean which has been reported, Lewis felt that he had begun the undertaking which brought him to Murkley. Before this it had been in a vague condition, a thing which might or might not come to anything. But now he had, to his own consciousness at least, committed himself. What effect his words might have had on Miss Jean's mind he was of course unable to tell; but, whatever she might do, there was now no retreat for him. He had given her to understand that the aspect in which she appeared to him was one of great interest and attraction. Having said so much, Lewis felt that it was incumbent on him to say more; and indeed, there was a sensation of thankfulness in his mind when he remembered that he had done so, and so made an end of his own

freedom in the matter. He was glad that he had done this before the evening on which he saw Philip and Katie together, and recognized in their intercourse a something which was lacking, and always would be lacking, in his own case. What matter? he said to himself. He had much, though not all. If Miss Jean became his wife, he would have the satisfaction of redeeming a wrong for one thing, and he would not have to blush for the good woman he had chosen. Her middle-aged calm and propriety indeed suited much better the rôle of wife, to his thinking, than Katie's youthfulness and levity. He thought of her as an Englishman thinks of home, as something to return to after the occupations and excitements of the world. What he looked forward to was not perhaps a domestic life, but a life in which it would always be good to come back after every variety of experience and personal vicissitude to the same calm, smiling presence, the indulgence and tenderness of one who would never be weary, never impatient, but always ready to hear what he had to say, and to sympathise and advise.

The more he dwelt upon this idea, the more it pleased him. What he wanted was not the

inseparable companion who would share all his life with him, but rather that domestic stronghold, that something to return to. There are always these differences in life. And after a while Lewis said to himself that he would have the best of it. Kate would want a great many observances which an elderly bride would not dream of; she would no doubt insist on knowing and sharing everything—her husband's thoughts as well as his home, and this was not an ideal which suited the pupil of Sir Patrick Murray. He had not been used to women, and they were no necessary part of his life. His mother, so far as he recollected her, had taken the place which he pleased himself to think his wife would naturally take. Many women rebel now-a-days at that ideal of a woman's existence which consists in being always at home, always ready to receive the wanderer, to kill innumerable fatted calves, and look out continually for the prodigal's return. Lewis would be no prodigal, but his idea was to live his own life unfettered, and to give no very great share in it to any woman. He would go back to her when tired, when sick or sorry; he would be always tenderly careful of her and kind. He would surround

her, in that home where she should be always waiting for him, with everything a woman could wish for; but clearly he meant her to stay there while he should enjoy everything and come back to be sympathized with. Such an ideal watcher is pleasant to everybody's thoughts; the mere recollection of the dweller at home, uncritical, all believing, to whom one can return, sure of eager attention, petting, and sympathy in every emergency, is in itself a consolation. It is the primitive idea of the woman's office.

Lewis meant no disrespect to womankind in adopting it as his idea of the relations to subsist between himself and his wife; he did not know any better, and nothing could be more entirely in accord with the position which Miss Jean, he thought, would naturally take. Few intending bridegrooms perhaps allot this character at once to their brides, but Lewis meant no harm; he subdued in himself the softer thoughts which the sight of Katie and Philip had roused in his mind, and in the morning was again fully awake to a state of satisfaction with his own scheme, and ready to proceed with it.

In the pre-occupation of his mind, Adam's fishing had ceased to amuse him, and he did not

want to meet Philip, whose conduct in compromising Katie, our young man highly disapproved of, even when he felt envious of his happiness. When he went out, he turned his steps in the opposite direction, going up the river, past the spot at which he had seen the lovers, and reaching, by that *détour* through the wood, the park of Murkley, and the neighbourhood of the great unfinished palace which had made him first acquainted with the family history. He had not returned to visit that memorial of ambition again. Perhaps there was nobody in the world who could regard it with the same feelings as those which moved Lewis. Sir Patrick had not left a good name behind him in the countryside. His tastes had never been those of a Scotch country gentleman. The building of this prodigious and pretentious house had offended all his neighbours, to whom it was almost a personal offence that he should attempt in this way to excel all their houses and put himself on so much higher a level. When it turned out that he was not able to complete what he had begun so ambitiously, a great deal of bitterness and unfriendly humour exhaled in the pitiless laughter with which his failure had been received, and there was nobody

about who did not more or less remember it against him—with a scorn of failure which is very strong in Scotland—that he had thus attempted a superiority which he was not able to maintain. His own family contemplated the stately folly with modified feelings. Such a standing proof of greatness had a certain effect upon their pride; but the failure was bitter to them, and there was the sense besides that their money had been wasted in the erection of a monstrosity which was of use to no one, and of which they could make nothing. To Lewis alone this great shell spoke eloquently of something which touched the heart. The dreams of old Sir Patrick's life, its aspirations, its pride, and hopes, all seemed to him embodied in these walls. The old man had scarcely spoken of it. It was only after seeing it that Lewis was able to recall words, incomprehensible at the moment, which he had now no doubt referred to this proud intention, this ambitious vanity. As he walked round it, he framed to himself an image of the young man, impulsive, proud, and full of a hundred hasty projects, who had turned into the old man he knew so well. If he had not been hasty, full of sudden impulses, would he ever, Lewis asked

himself, have taken up the charge of a friendless orphan, and made himself responsible for the life of a stranger in whom, save for tender charity and pity, he was in no way involved?

He thought of himself as another Castle of Murkley. Sir Patrick had wronged his children for the sake of both; his generosity had been as rash as his ambition. He had trained and formed his dependent for a life entirely above his natural prospects, and, if he had left Lewis in the lurch, the case would have been an exact parallel to that of the abandoned and uncompleted house. But the old man had done more for love than he had done for pride, and it was not the part of Lewis at least to blame him that he had again wronged his family for the sake of an impulse of his own. But as he roamed round and round this pale, half-ruined palace, with all its princely avenues and foreign trees, a great tenderness arose in the young man's heart for his old patron. What sanguine dreams must have been his while he was rearing these fine walls—what intentions of liberal life! In Lewis's imagination the picture rose all illuminated with sympathy and understanding. That sanguine, hasty mind would never look at

all on the other side; failure would not seem possible to him till it had come. He could imagine him over his plans, superintending his workmen, elate and dauntless. A smile came upon his face and tears to his eyes as he realised what young Sir Patrick in his pride and hope must have been, and what old Sir Patrick, exiled and disappointed, but still sanguine and prodigal, was. Lewis was the creation of his old age, as this castle was the creation of his youth, both of them in their way injustices, but the one capable of affording no compensation, the other so willing, so ready, so anxious to atone. This inspired him while he stood gazing up at the vacant windows of Sir Patrick's folly. It was wonderful to comprehend how he could ever have believed himself rich enough for such a habitation. It was a house for a prince: but this idea, which made most people angry and impatient with the rash and vain man, who had not paused to count the cost, melted altogether the heart of Lewis. Anyone but Sir Patrick would have hesitated before taking upon himself the charge of a young life; any man but Sir Patrick would have trained the orphan lad to lowlier uses. He had made a son of him,

and given him the happiest, most beautiful life. Dear old Parrain! it had been wrong, perhaps, but it was not for Lewis to judge. For him there was a greater privilege left, a more delightful duty—to atone.

He was walking round this silent, shut-up, windowless, and lifeless mansion, looking up at it with moisture in his eyes, when the sound of voices suddenly made him aware that he was not the only person thus occupied. He heard them but vaguely from the other side—voices in animated talk, but not near enough to hear what they were saying. The voices were all feminine, and by-and-by he made sure that they were the ladies of Murkley whom he was about to meet. Presently three figures became visible round the angle of the great house, one in advance of the others, walking backward, with a form very unlike that of Miss Margaret and Miss Jean, apparently gazing up at the walls, a blue veil flying about her, her head raised, her light figure lightly poised upon elastic feet, not like the sober attitude of the ladies he knew. A momentary wonder crossed the mind of Lewis as to this third sister, whom he had never seen, but he was too much pre-occupied to dwell upon

it. He divined that there was a little commotion among them at the sight of a stranger. He heard Miss Margaret say something about a veil, and then there came a protest in a voice full of complaining.

'Oh, Margaret, let my veil alone; there is no sun to spoil anybody's complexion, is there, Jean?'

Some word or sign, proceeding from one of the other ladies, made the speaker turn round, and Lewis had a momentary glimpse of a face which was very different from that of the other sisters; large, wondering eyes darted one glance at him, then the unknown turned again and hurried back to the group, dropping the blue veil in her hurry and astonishment. It was only a moment, and the sensation in Lewis's mind was not more than surprise. The glimpse was momentary, his mind was pre-occupied, and Miss Margaret advanced immediately to meet him, covering the retreat of the others.

'You are looking at our grandfather's grand castle,' Miss Margaret said.

'It is a wonderful place to find here, out in the wilderness; it is like a palace that has been walking about and has lost its way,' Lewis said,

with an attempt to cover the quickened movement of his own pulses in the surprise of the encounter.

'I would not call this the wilderness,' said Miss Margaret, with a momentary tone of pique. 'A great deal of care was taken about the place before this great barrack was built—it's more like a barrack, in my opinion, than a palace.'

'It is like the Louvre,' said Lewis; 'it must have been planned by some one who had travelled, who knew the French renaissance.' He felt a little jealous for the credit of his old friend.

'Oh, as for that,' Miss Margaret said, with a wave of her hand, 'knowledge was not wanting, nor taste either. Our grandfather, Sir Patrick Murray, was a man of great instruction: all the worse for his descendants. This is how he wasted our substance—and in other ways.'

'He was a collector, I suppose?'

'I perhaps don't understand what you call a collector—a gatherer of costly things that are of no use to any mortal? Oh, he was that, and more. And there are other ways in which a man can wrong his family; but it's not a subject

that can be interesting to a stranger,' Miss Margaret added, closing her mouth with a certain peremptory firmness, as if to conclude the discussion. 'Yon,' she resumed, 'was to have been the great banqueting hall: and the drawing-rooms, you see—there were to be three of them, the outer and the inner, and the lady's *bouédwore* —were to occupy the other side; where he was to get the lady and the banquet Sir Patrick never took thought. He was not a man to take thought; but he was very well instructed, and knew what he was doing—from that point of view. If he had known better about the money, and counted the cost like the man in the gospel, it would have been better for them who came after him. But the Murrays were never careful at counting the cost,'—that air of pride with which prodigality in a family is always confessed came over Miss Margaret as she said this, throwing up her head and animating her countenance. Nobody ever yet made a statement of thrift and carefulness with the same proud gratification. It is unpleasant to be poor, but Nature is always more pleased with the lavish than the careful. Lewis suffered himself to be led round the further side of the building, while she talked

and pointed out the position of the rooms. It was a moment full of excitement for the young man; he listened eagerly while she spoke of Sir Patrick, with the strongest sense of that link between them to which she had not the slightest clue. Nor had he the slightest clue to the motive which induced her to expatiate upon the building and lead him round by the other side. The blue veil and the wondering, youthful face it guarded had not done more as yet than touch his mind with a momentary suspicion; his interest was engaged, not in secret questionings about Lilias, as the elder sister thought, but in recollections and associations of a very different kind.

'Perhaps,' he said, following out his own thoughts, 'had he waited and gone more softly there would have been no imprudence.'

'Waiting and going softly are not in our nature: no: I'm but a woman, with little money, and very seriously brought up—and with my youth past, and no motive; but if I were to let myself go—even now!'

A sudden flush came over her face, her eyes shone, and then Lewis perceived that Miss Margaret, if she had not made up her mind to be

elderly and homely, would still be a handsome and imposing personage, whom the society he had known would have admired and followed. He thought that if she had been Sir Patrick's companion his *salon* might have been very different. With this view he could not help gazing at her with a great curiosity, wondering how she would have filled that place, and thinking what a pity that this, which would have ruined his own prospects, had not been.

She looked at him quickly, meeting his gaze, and her eyes fell momentarily under it.

'You think me an old fool,' she said, 'and no wonder. Imprudence—that is always folly when it takes the power of beginning what you cannot finish—would be worse folly than ever in a person like me; but, you see, I never let myself go.'

'That is not what I was thinking,' said Lewis. 'I was thinking—wondering, though I had no right—why you did not go to him when he was old.'

'Go to him—to whom?' she cried, astonished.

'Ah! pardon! I have met Sir Patrick—abroad.'

Miss Margaret turned upon him, and made a

close and, as Lewis thought, suspicious inspection of his face.

'If you met Sir Patrick abroad, you must have seen that he had no need of his natural family, nor wish for them. There was no place for us there. Perhaps you have not heard that he withdrew his property from his family and gave it to one that was not a drop's blood to him—a creature that had stolen into a silly old man's favour? But no, that would not be known abroad,' she added, with a long-drawn breath. Lewis felt himself shrink from her eye; he made a step backward, with a sense of guilt which in all the many discussions of the subject had never affected him before.

'No,' he said, with an involuntary tone of apology, 'no, it was not known, I think, that he had—any relations——'

Miss Margaret turned on him again with indignation more scathing than before.

'Not known that he had relations!' then she paused, and gave vent to a little laugh, 'that must have been by persons who were very ignorant—by people out of society themselves,' she said.

To this Lewis made no reply. What could he say? It was true that he had no standing

in society himself, and he now perceived that he had been guilty of one of his usual imprudences in drawing the attention of a mind much more keen than Miss Jean's, and able to put things together, to himself and his antecedents. After a moment she resumed.

'I am speaking too strongly perhaps to you, a stranger. It was perhaps not to be expected —abroad—that everybody should know the Murrays of Murkley. That is just one of the evils of that life abroad, that it is lost sight of who you belong to. In your own country everybody knows. If you put a friendly person in the place of your flesh and blood, the whole country cries out; but among strangers, who thinks or cares? No, no, I was wrong there; I ask your pardon. In Scotland, or even in England, Sir Patrick Murray's relations would be as well known as the Queen's, but not abroad —that was his safeguard, and I forgot. Poor, silly old man!' Miss Margaret said, after a pause, with energy, 'he was little to me. I have scarcely seen him all my days, and Lilias never at all.'

It seemed to Lewis that in this, perhaps, there was some explanation and apology for the unfortunate position of affairs; but he was so glad

to escape from further questions that he did not attempt to follow the subject further. They had by this time come round the other corner of the building, and he perceived that the two other ladies had not waited for Miss Margaret, but were already half-way along the broad and well-kept drive which led from the unfinished palace to the old house. The blue veil fluttering in advance caught his eye, and he said, more with the desire to divert his companion from the previous subject than out of any special interest in this,

'Your sister, whom I have not seen, is the youngest?'

Here Miss Margaret, with a little start, recalled herself to a recollection which had temporarily dropped from her mind. She fixed him with her eye.

'Yes, she is the youngest,' she replied. And what of that? her tone seemed to say.

'I had made one of the ridiculous mistakes strangers make,' he said, very conciliatory, his reason for this being, however, totally different from the one she attributed to him. 'I had supposed—you will say I had no right to suppose anything, but one guesses and speculates

in spite of one's self—I had supposed that Miss Lilias was the eldest, and in bad health; whereas by the glimpse I had she is——'

'Quite young,' said Miss Margaret, taking the words out of his mouth—'that is, quite young in comparison with Jean and me: but not so strong perhaps as might be desired, and an anxious and careful charge to us. Are you staying long here?'

'That will depend upon—various matters,' Lewis said. 'It is your sister Miss Jean whom I have had the pleasure to see most. You will pardon me if I say to you that I find a great attraction in her society. It is presumptuous perhaps on my part, but it is thought right where I have been brought up that one should say this when it occurs, without delay, to the family——'

Miss Margaret looked at him with eyes of unfeigned astonishment.

'Say—what?' she asked, pausing to survey him once more. Was the young man out of his senses? she said to herself.

'I mean,' said Lewis, with that smile with which he assured everybody that he was anxious to please them, 'that in all other countries but

England things are so. The head of the family is consulted first before a man will dare to speak to a lady; I understand it is not so here.'

'And you mean to speak to me as the head of the family?' said Miss Margaret. 'Well, perhaps you are not far wrong; but my sister Jean and I are equals—there is no superior between us. The only thing is, that being a sweet and submissive creature, a better woman than I will ever be, she leaves most things in my hands.'

'That was my idea,' Lewis said.

'And you wanted to speak to me of something that concerned Jean? Well, there could be to me no more interesting subject: though what a young man like you that might be her son, and a stranger, can have to say to me about Jean——'

Lewis paused. He had not considered how awful it was to confront the keen, inquiring eyes of the head of the family, who looked him, he thought, through and through, and who, if he submitted his over-candid countenance for long to her inspection, would probably end by reading everything that was in him both what he meant to show and what he wished to conceal.

'Perhaps,' he said, 'I am premature. What I would have said was to ask if—I may come again? What further I wish will remain till later. If Miss Murray will afford to me the happiness of coming, or recommending myself so far as I can——'

'You speak,' said Miss Margaret, somewhat grimly, and with a laugh, 'as if you were wanting to come wooing to our house. Now speak out, and tell me to whom. I'll allow there's good in your foreign notions, if you give me this warning; and I will warn you in your turn, my young friend.'

'I hope you will pardon my ignorance, if I do wrong,' said Lewis. 'It is your sister, Miss Jean, whom I have seen most. I have not known before such a woman. There is to me a charm—which I cannot explain. If I might see her—if it might be permitted to me to recommend myself——'

Miss Margaret had been gazing at him with eyes of such astonishment that he was disconcerted by the look. He came to a somewhat confused pause, and stood silent before her, with something of the air of a culprit on his trial. Then she cried out suddenly, 'Jean!'

and burst into a resounding laugh, which seemed to roll forth over all the landscape, and return from the tops of the trees. There is no more crushing way of receiving such a suggestion. The young man stood before her, silent, his face flushed, his eyes cast down for the moment. At length, being a sanguine youth, and too entirely good-humoured himself to impute evil intentions to anyone, he began to recover. He looked up at her with a deprecating smile.

'I amuse you it seems——' he said.

'Amuse me!' said Miss Margaret, with another peal of laughter; and then she dried her eyes, and recovered her composure. 'Mr. Murray—if your name is Murray—' she said; 'if you mean this for a joke—but I will not do you that injustice; I see you mean it in earnest. It is very unexpected. Do you think you have had time enough to consider whether this is a wise resolution? Do you remember that she is twice your age? No, no, I would not advise you to go that length,' Miss Margaret said.

'The question is, if you will forbid me,' said Lewis; 'if you will say I must not come.'

'Ay! And what would you do then?'

'I think,' he said, with a little hesitation, 'I should then adopt the English way. I should submit my cause to your sister herself. But then there would be no deception, you would know.'

He met her with such an open look that Miss Margaret was disarmed.

'You are a strange young man,' she said, 'with a strange taste for a young man: but I think you're honest: or else you are a terrible deceiver —and, if your meaning is what you say, you have no motive, that I can see, to deceive.'

'I have told you my motive,' said Lewis. 'I speak the truth.'

She looked at him again with her searching eyes.

'Perhaps you think we are rich?' she said.

'I have heard, on the contrary, that——'

She waved her hand. It was not necessary that he should say poor.

'Perhaps you think—but I cannot attempt to fathom you,' she said. 'You are a very strange young man. Jean! have you considered that she's twice your age? I have no right to interfere. I will not forbid you the house. But she will never take you, or any like you; she has more sense,' Miss Margaret cried.

To this Lewis only answered with a bow and a smile, in which perhaps there was something of the conqueror; for indeed it did not occur to him, as a contingency to be taken into consideration, that she might refuse him. They walked on together for some time in silence, for Miss Margaret was too much confused and excited to speak, and Lewis had no more to say to her, feeling that it was only justice to the sister he had chosen that she should have the first and the best of the plea. It might be ten minutes after, and they were in sight of the old house, within which the two figures before them had disappeared, when Miss Margaret suddenly stopped short, and turned upon him with a very serious, and indeed threatening countenance.

'Young man,' she said, in a low and passionate voice, 'if you should prove to be making a mask of my sister for other designs: if it should be putting forward one to veil a deeper design upon another, then look you to yourself—for I'll neither forgive you, nor let you slip out of my hands.'

Lewis met this unexpected address with sincere astonishment.

'Pardon me, but I do not know what deeper design I could have. What is it that I could do to make you angry?' he said.

She looked at him once more from head to foot, as if his shoes or the cut of his coat (which was somewhat foreign) could have enlightened her as to his real motives: and then she said,

'I will take upon me to give you useful information. In the mornings I am mostly occupied. You will find my sister Jean by herself before one o'clock, and nobody to interfere.'

## CHAPTER XIII.

IT was with a mixture of indignation and somewhat grim humour that Miss Margaret gave the permission and sanction to Lewis's addresses which have been above recorded. There was a smile upon her face as she left him and went indoors, which burst forth in a short laugh as she entered—a laugh of derision and mockery, yet of anger as well, mingled with a sort of satisfaction in the idea of luring this presumptuous young man to his fate. Jean to be made love to at this time of day by a young man who might have been her son! (this, of course, was an exaggeration, but exaggeration is inevitable in such circumstances).

The purely comic light in which she had at first contemplated the idea gradually changed into an angry appreciation of the absurdity

which seemed to involve her sister too, and a lively desire to punish the offender. That would be best done by giving him unlimited opportunity to compromise himself, she decided, and it was with this vindictive meaning, and not anything softer or more friendly, that she had so pointedly indicated to Lewis the best time and manner of approaching Miss Jean. He partially divined the satire and fierce gleam in her eyes, but only partially, for to him there was no absurdity in the matter.

Miss Margaret's heart almost smote her as he stood with his hat off, and his genial young countenance smiling and glowing, thanking her for what she had said; but this was only a momentary sensation, and when she went in she laughed with derision and the anticipation of a speedy end to a piece of folly which seemed to her beyond parallel. Such things had been heard of as that a young man who was poor, should basely and sordidly decide upon marrying, if he could, an old woman who was rich; but when there was no such motive possible— when, instead of being rich, the suitor was aware that the woman he sought was poor, then the matter [illegible] comprehension altogether.

Miss Margaret was not sufficiently impartial to pause and think of this now, but as the day went on, and especially as she sat silent in the evening, and heard Lilias prattling to Jean, there were various points which returned to her mind with wonder. Why should he wish to marry Jean? Miss Margaret glanced at her, then looked steadily, then began to contemplate her sister with changed eyes. Something was different in Jean—was it that she looked younger?—something like what she used to look fifteen years ago? Was it that new hopes, new plans were rising in her mind? For the first time there breathed across Miss Margaret a cold and chilling breath of doubt—was it so sure that Jean would teach him his place, would reject all his overtures? The thought of anything else filled her with horror and shame. A young man, young enough to be her son—was it, could it be possible that she would listen to him? A groan came from Miss Margaret's breast in spite of herself.

'What is the matter?' cried Miss Jean, wondering.

'Oh, just nothing's the matter—an idea that came into my mind—nothing that you could be interested in,' said Miss Margaret.

'Am I not interested in everything that can make you sigh or make you think?' said Miss Jean, with her soft voice.

'Yes, tell us—tell us what it is,' said Lilias.

And then Miss Margaret laughed.

'You will know sooner or later, if it comes to anything,' she said, getting up with a little impatience and leaving them.

The new turn which her thoughts had taken filled her with dismay. She went out to the lime-tree walk which lay between the house and the high wall, all clothed with ivy, with bunches of honeysuckle hanging from its embattled height. This was the walk that was considered to be haunted, though no one was afraid of the gentle ghost that dwelt there. Miss Margaret came out hastily to cool her cheeks, which were burning, and divert her mind, which was full of uncomfortable thoughts. It was still light, though it was nearly bed-time; the trees, so silken green, kept their colour, though in a sort of spiritualized tint, in the pale clear light. The sound of footsteps (which no doubt a scientific inquirer would have decided to come from some entirely natural phenomena of acoustics quite explainable and common-

place) was more distinct than usual in the complete stillness of the evening. It was said to be a lady who had died for love—one of the daughters of Murkley in a distant age, who was the ghost of this pensive walk. She was never visible; her steps softly sounding upon the path in a regular cadence, coming and going, was all that was known of her. Sometimes, when the family was in difficulty or danger, it had been reported that a sigh was heard. But no one living had heard the sigh. And even the maids were not afraid to walk in daylight in this visionary place. There was a certain green line close by the trees which was never encroached upon, and which was coloured by patches of mosses. It was there the lady walked, so people said, without considering that no footsteps could have sounded clear from that natural velvet. Miss Margaret threw her little shawl over her cap, and went out into the mysterious stillness, broken by those still more mysterious sounds which she had been accustomed to from her childhood. It soothed her to be there, and she took herself to task with a little indignation. That she should suspect her sister! that she should think it possible that

Jean could 'make a fool of herself!' When she had spent half an hour in the walk, slowly pacing up and down, hearing the steps of that other mysterious passenger going and coming, she returned to the house subdued. But she did not go back to the drawing-room where Jean was. Her fears on the subject of Lilias had altogether departed from her mind with Lewis' extraordinary announcement; but even the risk of an entanglement for Lilias, though more likely, and perhaps more serious, would have been in the course of nature. It would not have affected her with a sense of shame and intolerant passion like any short-coming on the part of Jean.

As for Lewis, he went home to his inn pleased, but not agitated, like Miss Margaret. He was very much satisfied with the sanction thus accorded to him, and with the approval implied in it, as he thought. If the elder sister had been disposed to oppose him, or, indeed, if she had not approved of what he was about to do, she would not have gone so far as to indicate to him when he might come. Miss Margaret's angry enjoyment of the idea of his discomfiture, her eagerness to lead him to the point so that he

might be crushed at once, never occurred to Lewis. There was nothing in his own honest intentions to throw light upon such a meaning. For his own part, he did not contemplate the idea of failure at all. He thought that Miss Jean, though she might be surprised at his proposal, could have no reason to be offended by it, and he believed that he would be successful. It seemed to him entirely to her advantage, modest as he was. Her age, he thought, would make the idea of a husband not less, but more agreeable to her. It was an advancement in life of which she had probably given up all hopes. This was his idea in an economical point of view, so to speak, and not from any overweening opinion of himself. Marriage, he had been trained to believe, was often irksome and disagreeable to a man, but for a woman it was a necessity of well-being, of dignity, almost of self-respect. It was this that gave him the calm confidence he had in respect to Miss Jean. She would be startled, no doubt. It would take away her breath to find herself, after all, still within the brighter circle of existence; but she would not throw away this last and probably unexpected chance. Personal vanity had no-

thing to do with Lewis' calm conviction. It was not he that would be irresistible to her; but the fact of having a step in existence offered to her—a higher place.

It was about noon next day when he set out for the Castle; and when he was shown into the drawing-room, he found Miss Jean, as before, seated over her table-cover, with all her silks arranged upon her table, and her carnation in a glass being copied. She did not get up to greet him, as she had done before. Even her old-fashioned ideas of politeness, which were more rigorous than anything in the present day, yielded to the friendly familiarity with which she was beginning to regard him. She gave him her hand with a kind smile.

'This is very good of you, Mr. Murray,' she said, 'to give up a bonny morning to me;' her eyes went instinctively to the piano as she spoke. This piqued Lewis a very little; but he loved music too well to disappoint her.

'The finer the morning,' he said, 'the more congenial it is to music.' There was time enough to indulge himself and her before beginning the serious business of the matter between them, and indeed it was not even necessary that

there should be anything said upon that serious matter to-day.

'And that is true,' said Miss Jean, fervently; 'the evening perhaps is the best of all; the fading of the daylight, and the hushing of the world, and the coming on of rest—that is beautiful with music. I like it in the dusk, and I like it in the dark, when ye can only hear, not see, and your soul goes upon the sound. But I like it as well in the day, in the brightness, in the middle of life, at all times; it is never out of season,' she added, with an enthusiasm which elevated her simple countenance.

Lewis felt a sensation of pride and happiness as he looked at her. No one could say she was unworthy a man's choice or affections. It would do him honour among all who were qualified to judge that he had made such a choice. Miss Jean was somewhat astonished by the way in which he turned upon her. It half confused, half pleased her. For a long time no man had looked so intently upon her tranquil, middle-aged countenance. She thought he was 'an affectionate lad,' probably being without mother or sister to spend his natural kindness upon, and therefore eager to respond

to it wherever he found it. His compliments on their former meeting she had put away out of her mind, though they had startled and almost abashed her for the moment; but then compliments were the common-places of foreigners, everybody knew that they meant nothing, certainly no harm. It was just the same, she thought, as if a Scotchman had said, 'I am glad to see you looking well,' no more than that.

And then he began to play. He chose Mozart after their talk about the times and seasons. Lewis was not naturally given to much exercise of the fancy, but he was very sympathetic, and readily took his cue from any mind which was congenial to him. He thought that the splendour of this great composer was appropriate to the richness and fulness of the noon. Themes more dreamy, more visionary, more simply sweet would be the language of the evening. And once more he watched, with an interest and sympathy which he thought must be as nearly like love as possible, the gradual forgetfulness of everything but the music which came over Miss Jean. First her work flagged, then she pushed away the carnation which she was copying to one side, and let her table-cover

drop on her knees: then she leant forward on the little table, her head in her hands, her eyes fixed upon him; then those eyes filled with tears, and saw nothing, neither him nor any accessory, but only a mystic world of sweetness and emotion which she was utterly incapable of describing, but which shone through her face with an eloquence which was beyond words. Lewis, as he looked at her in this ecstatic state, which he had the power of throwing her into, knew very well that, though he was the performer, and she only the listener, the music was not half to him what it was to her. It filled her soul, it carried her away above the world, and all that was in it. When he paused, she sank back in her chair overwhelmed, unable to say anything. He was fond of applause, but applause was not necessary here.

'I wish,' he said, rising, and coming towards her, full of a genuine warmth and enthusiasm, 'that I could play to you for ever.'

She did not speak for a little, but smiled, and dried her soft eyes.

'No—no—that would be too much,' she said.

'It would be too much to continue always, oh, yes—but I do not mean that. To play to

you whenever you pleased, as often as you pleased; when you wished to come out of the common, to be happy; for it makes you happy?'

'I think it must be like Heaven,' said Miss Jean, fervently; 'that is all I can think of—the skies opening, and the angels singing.'

'That is beautiful,' he cried, 'to open Heaven. That is what I should like to do for you—always. To have it ready for you when you pleased.'

'Yon have a kind heart,' said Miss Jean; 'oh, you have a kind heart. But, if it cannot be always,' she said, with a tender smile, 'you must just let it be as often as you can, as long as you are here.'

'I am going to stay here,' said Lewis, 'that is, if you will let me.'

'Me! Let you! But it is little I can have to do with it: and you may be sure I would let you—and kindly welcome, kindly welcome,' said Miss Jean, recovering herself.

She was a little ashamed of feeling so deeply, but the beauty of the music so completely occupied her mind that, save as 'a kind lad,' she did not think of Lewis at all.

'If you will make me welcome, then I will

stay. It depends upon you altogether; I will stay or I will go away, as you please. It is you that must decide,' the young man said.

He was standing on the other side of the little table, his face lit up with the enthusiasm of sympathy and pleasure. It was sweet to him to have made so profound an impression, and the emotion in Miss Jean's mind reflected itself in him. He admired her, he loved her for feeling so much. It threw a tender light upon everything about her; there was no effort wanting to look tenderly and speak tenderly with all the emotion of a genuine sentiment. His eyes glowed with softness and warmth, his voice took a pleading tone, he was ready to have put himself at her feet, actually as well as metaphorically, so much was he touched and moved by this sympathetic strain of feeling. Miss Jean, for her part, gathering her work into her hand, and recovering herself slowly, looked up with eyes of simple surprise at the extraordinary aspect of the young stranger.

'You are meaning—? to be sure, we will be very glad, very happy to have you for a neighbour; but, knowing so little of the circumstances, how can we, that are but strangers——'

They were both so pre-occupied that they had not heard anything but the sound of their own voices, and, when another suddenly interposed, they started as if a shot had been fired beside them.

'Jean, Margaret sent me to tell you dinner was on the table,' was the peaceful intimation this voice made.

Lewis turned round with a nervous impatience, finding the interruption vexatious. He turned round, and found himself suddenly in a presence he had never been clearly conscious of before. What was it? To external appearance a young, slight girl, fair as Scottish beauty ought to be, with light locks just tinged here and there with the brighter light which makes them golden, a complexion of the most dazzling purity, eyes, somewhat astonished, of deep blue, and features perhaps not equal in quality to all the rest, but harmonious enough in their youth and softness. This was what she was in actual flesh and blood; but as she appeared to Lewis, at that moment actually feeling, and with all his might endeavouring to impress upon a middle-aged woman, the fervour of his devotion, and his dependence upon her fiat, she was something more.

She was Youth in person, she was Love, and Hope, and a sort of incarnate delight. He looked at her, and the words he had been speaking died from his lips, the enthusiasm he had been feeling was blown out as if it had been the flame of a candle. He forgot himself and good manners, and his position as a stranger, and stood, his lips apart, his eyes wide opened, gazing at her at once in amazement and admiration.

Lilias looked at him too with much astonishment and a good deal of curiosity. Was this the person whom Margaret had suggested to be the man from Kilmorley come to tune the piano? Though she was a very docile little girl, there were moments when she could be wilful. She made Lewis a little curtsey, and gave him a smile which went to his head like wine.

'And Margaret hopes the gentleman will come too,' Lilias said.

'Oh!' cried Miss Jean, with a tremor of conscience, and a questioning look towards her little sister. Could it be possible that Margaret —'I am sure,' she said, 'we will all be pleased if you will come and eat something with us; it is our dinner, as we are only ladies, without a

man in the house; but it will do for luncheon for you.'

'If you will permit me,' said Lewis, with that profound bow which they all thought foreign.

He drew away from the little table, so as to leave Miss Jean room to gather together her embroidery before she rose from her chair, and waited, ready to follow the ladies. The proposal was delightful to him. He did not pause to ask whether the message had really come from Miss Margaret; he had none of Miss Jean's tremor. He thought only that he was ready to follow this nymph, this vision, to the end of the world if she pleased. Had he ever seen anything so beautiful? he asked himself: and, as may easily be supposed, said 'No' with hasty readiness. Lilias was in the perfection of youthful bloom and freshness, with the down upon her like a peach, untouched by anything that could impair that dazzling, morning glory; the dark old house, and the companionship of the two sisters who in her presence became old and faded, threw up her bloom all the more, and so did her simple frock, the girlish fashion of her hair, her school-room apron, her position as Margaret's messenger.

'Come along, then,' she said, lightly, and ran off in advance.

Lewis offered his arm to Miss Jean. She was very nervous, he thought, because of what he had been saying to her—but Miss Jean had by no means taken up, as he meant them, the things he had been saying to her, and was nervous because of her doubt whether Margaret really meant this invitation. What if it was a sudden thought of Lilias alone? The girl did wicked things now and then of this sort, little rebellions 'in fun,' audacities which sometimes vexed Margaret. But Miss Jean's instincts of hospitality would have tempted her, even without this proceeding on the part of Lilias, to invite her visitor, towards whom she felt kindly. She put her arm within his with a little tremor: and Lewis felt the quiver, and thought that he had been successful in his suit. He pressed her hand softly against his side. Though he had been so startled, shaken out of his previous thoughts by this sudden apparition, yet it did not occur to him to be unfaithful. Nothing yet occurred to him except that here was a new thing, a new glory and beauty returned into life. This fairy creature glided out of the room before them, ran

downstairs like a ray of sunshine, making the dark, old oak staircase bright, and darted in at the open door of the dining-room, where she evidently announced their coming with a laugh. The laugh made Lewis smile in sympathy, but it made Miss Jean tremble, for it proved that her alarm was justified, and so did the sudden, startled sound of Miss Margaret's deeper voice. What Lilias said was, with that laugh,

'Margaret, I have asked the music man to come too.'

'The music man! He is no music man,' cried Miss Margaret, and then she said, 'Quick, Simon, quick, lay another place.' There was no time for further explanations now.

Lewis thought this meal was the most delightful he had ever eaten in his life. The two elder sisters sat at the head and foot of the table, and opposite to him was Lilias, with a little flush of triumph in her face, and a mischievous smile about the corners of her mouth. She did not talk very much, and to him not at all. The other ladies maintained the conversation chiefly between them. For his own part he was content to say very little, to confine himself to replying when they spoke to him,

and listening eagerly to their talk, and watching the beautiful girl whom he could not raise his eyes without seeing, and whose glance he met now and then with something of the freemasonry of youth. He did not know her, nor she him, while he was acquainted with both the other ladies, and felt himself already in a position of intimacy and sympathetic friendship, if no more, with Miss Jean; but yet instinctively, and in a moment, they two, he felt, constituted a faction, a party, youth against age.

While the elders talked, she would shoot a little glance at him across the table, a glimmer of a smile would go over her face, in which there was an appeal to him for an answering smile; a sort of unconscious telegraph of mutual understanding was set up between them. When Miss Margaret questioned him, he replied with a look to Lilias first to see if she were listening. When she spoke, though it was only a monosyllable, he paused to listen. After, when it was over, the whole scene appeared to him like a dream, the dark wainscot of the room, with the bloom of that young face against it, Miss Margaret against the light, Miss Jean, with her sweet but faded face in the full illumination of

the window, old Simon making slow circles round the table. His own heart was beating with pleasure, with suspense, with excitement, the feeling that something had happened to him, something new which he scarcely understood. He did not realize that he had been suddenly stopped in his love-making to Miss Jean by this apparition, nor that it had taken from him all desire to carry on that love-making. Indeed, his mind had not taken in the new occurrence at all; he was still in this state of sensation, knowing that here was a new event which had suddenly happened to him, but not knowing what it was.

## CHAPTER XIV.

LEWIS left the Castle like a man in a dream. There was an intoxication about him which affected his whole being vaguely, as actual intoxication might do, in which there was not the slightest self-reproach or sense of doing wrong. He was elated, delighted, happy; a sort of suffusion of sweetness and brightness was in his veins, filling up everything. It affected him like a new sensation, a new event, a revelation of new possibilities. It never had occurred to him that the world could be so sweet, or any mortal creature so happy. Why was he so happy? Because there was in existence a creature so young, so fair, so sweet, as to make life itself look beautiful. What reason was that for the happiness of one who had nothing to do with her, whose life could not be affected one way or other by her existence? But he did not at

first ask himself that question. It made him glad without any reason; it affected him foolishly. He could have laughed for pleasure; he thought better of everything for her sake. She seemed to fill the fresh country with a reflection of herself. He thought of nothing else as he walked down to his inn in the afternoon. She had not cared for his society, but disappeared immediately after dinner on a sign from her sister, turning and making him a salutation which was half a curtsey and half a smiling nod of familiarity. She too, perhaps, had felt the youth in him, and had not felt herself capable of curtseying ceremoniously as she had been taught. There was a merry glimmer in her eyes, though the rest of her was so demure, and this conjunction was delightful to him. He had not known what the other ladies said to him after; a kind of golden mist had seemed to him to fill the air. The place was not desolate when she went out of it, because she left it full of herself, full of vibrations and echoes. He had heard the kind elder voices in his ears, with their long sentences and the responsive waves of their talk, and had been aware that he took some share in it, had answered them when they

spoke, and was not without comprehension of their meaning. But he had felt that he was in haste to get away, to be alone, to think over this new thing. And accordingly he did think it over, or rather he walked into the unbroken enjoyment of it, into the contemplation of Lilias, when he walked out of those old-fashioned doors into the afternoon sunshine. He did not think of her, he only moved along in a current which was her, in air which was full of her. He did not understand the sensation; it was as new to him as she was—new and delightful, entrancing his soul.

Lewis moved along down the country road and through the village with his heart full of this strange and novel flood of feeling. Her look, as, turning his head suddenly in the midst of the genuine fervour of his address to Miss Jean, he had caught sight of her, and the words had gone out on his lips: the turn of her head, the going and coming of her smile as she sat opposite to him at table, the few words she said, the simplicity of appearance and movements, only a little girl, and yet the queen of all—these were before him as he walked, and not the features of the landscape. Now it was

one recollection, now another; the manner in which she turned to go out of the room, the half curtsey, the half laugh, full of a sweet malice, the glance of her blue eyes, half mocking, half ceremonious. Never had drama been so full of interest for a spectator. He went over everything. Then he went into his parlour and threw himself down upon his hard angular sofa, and went over it all again—every look, every movement, every raising of the eyelids. He seemed to himself not to have forgotten a single movement, or step, or word, or almost breath. She came in with him to the dingy room just as she had come along the road. It was all a revelation, and so full of dazzling light that it confused his mind and everything about him; the sun was not so bright, nor the world so fair, as this new creature who had suddenly made of herself a new centre to the universe.

Lewis had never in his life been so happy as he was in that curious ecstasy. He did not ask himself why he went into details, he did not say to himself that to have her, to appropriate her to himself, was henceforward to be the object of his life. Many men have declared in a moment, 'This of all maids is the one maid for me.'

But Lewis did not go so far as this; he had not thought as yet of appropriation. What he felt was that here, in the world, was a creature more sweet, more beautiful than he had ever dreamt of, and that the place was transfigured, and mere living made into a delight because she was there. This made the blood course through his veins with a warmth and fulness he had never known before; he felt as if some great happiness had come to him. But even when he paused and asked himself what was the meaning of it, what good could come to him from it, he found no answer to give to that question. He pushed it aside indeed; he had nothing to do with it in his present mood.

Later, as it began to approach evening, Lewis met Mr. Seton on the river-side, and, having nothing better to do, walked with him for a mile or two on his way to some piece of parochial duty. The minister complained a little of his work, as everybody is apt to do.

'They expect to be visited, however far off they may be,' he said, with a pucker in his forehead and a quiver of complaint in his voice, 'and instead of bringing their children to church, as is their duty, they will find some

reason for a private christening. It is far too much the way in these parts. Of course, the session might make a stand on the subject, and some of my elders would be very well inclined, but what is the use of making a commotion? I am fond of peace. I always say just for this once—and that is how they come over me—rather that than make a disturbance. I am always for yielding—when the question is not vital—when the question is not vital! Of course, I make my stand upon that.'

'To be sure,' said Lewis, vaguely, though he had only the faintest idea what was meant.

'Better be baptised privately than not be baptised at all,' said the minister, solemnly. 'But, to do the people justice, they are not so bad as that. They will go to the Free Kirk, or the U. P., but they will not leave a child unchristened. It is in the great towns that you find that kind of heathenism, not in the country. The country, there is little question, is better in some ways. There is not so much scepticism. Perhaps you will say there is more indifference on all subjects, and that our ploughmen just take things for granted?'

'Oh, no,' said Lewis, more vague than ever, 'I certainly should not say that.'

'You think not? Well, there are just very curious intellects among them, I must allow that—strange bits of thought, you know, but seldom sceptical.' Mr. Seton spoke with a certain regret, for he felt himself qualified to meet the legions of infidelity, and longed for nothing so much as the opportunity of converting an unbeliever. 'The doubts they entertain are upon high points of doctrine which probably a young man like you would never have heard of; but they make nothing of what is often a great difficulty to a cultivated spirit—the standards, Mr. Murray. You will sympathise with that difficulty. The Westminster confession may be a stumbling-block to me, and the like of me,' but as for these ploughmen they will put to their hand to the confession, or to a dozen confessions. They swallow the longer and the shorter catechisms without even wishing—they have very strong stomachs in the way of doctrine. It is not on that point you will ever find them wanting. The difficulties and dangers of more delicate minds——' Mr. Seton said, bending upon Lewis a benignant eye.

'I suppose go with more delicate bodies,' said that young man, with a laugh, which was profoundly inappropriate. And he had to laugh alone at his own jest, the minister looking upon him with gravity and disapproval, both shocked and disappointed that he should show so little appreciation. 'But the ploughmen,' he said, hastily and humbly, 'are not the most interesting part of the people?'

'If you think a small country gentleman, such as we have here, is more interesting, Mr. Murray, in an intellectual point of view——'

'No, no,' said Lewis, half abashed, half amused. 'You must not think so badly of me; I was thinking of—some of the ladies.'

At this the minister paused, and gave him a doubtful look, apprehensive that the stranger was indulging in a little satire; but as Lewis laughed with ingratiating simplicity and blushed a little, and added, 'I own they are more interesting to me,' the minister too unbended, and joined in the laugh, and shook his head the while.

'Ah! if we were all young men. But, to be sure, we must make allowance for those that are. And which of the ladies is it that you

find so interesting, if it is not indiscreet to inquire?'

This question brought Lewis back to a perception that he was on delicate ground.

'All whom I have met with,' he said. 'The intercourse is different, very different from what I have been used to. The young ladies, who are so frank, who meet us so—simply.'

'Ah, that is your foreign way of thinking,' said Mr. Seton. 'No doubt it seems strange to you, but we have every confidence in our daughters. It is rarely, very rarely that it is found to be an undeserved confidence.'

'But some are not so,' said Lewis. He had thought a few minutes before that it would be impossible to bring the conversation to this subject, and he could scarcely believe now in the easy success of his own bold attempt. 'Some are not so. I think there is one young lady who is guarded as people do abroad. I have been here so long, and I saw her but for the first time to-day.'

'How long have you been here—three weeks? That is not a lifetime,' said the minister. 'And who may this be that is taken such care of? I cannot call to mind——'

'It is the ladies at the Castle who interest me so much,' said Lewis, 'especially the less old one, she whom you call Miss Jean, and who is so susceptible to music. I have seen no one who is more susceptible. It takes possession of her; it carries her away. To see it is beautiful,' cried Lewis. 'I am very much interested in Miss Jean; but there is one, much more young, whom I have only seen for the first time——'

'Indeed!' said Mr. Seton. 'Who could that be?' And then his tone changed in a moment. 'Oh, Lilias! Yes, to be sure. The old sisters, you see, they are two old maids; they have got I don't know what ideas in their heads. Poor little thing! they will make an old maid of her like themselves. I hear my wife and Katie say that she sees nobody. Poor girl! But then, the old ladies are peculiar,' the minister said.

'Are they such very old ladies?' said Lewis, somewhat piqued. 'I think that, on the whole, I like that—to have a lovely young lady, like a flower, kept apart from the world, that pleases me. Perhaps it is that I, too, am old-fashioned.'

'Is she so lovely?' said the minister, with a laugh. 'Well, well, perhaps she is so. I am

saying nothing against it. She is just little Lilias Murray to me. I've seen her grow up like my own. She is older though than Katie. And so you admire her very much? I must tell my wife. My wife will be very much amused to hear that somebody has seen her after all, and that she is thought to be lovely, poor little thing!' Mr. Seton repeated, with a laugh of amusement.

This annoyed Lewis more than he could say.

'It is a very distinguished family,' he said, with gravity. 'I find it so. The two ladies like châtelaines of the old time; and the younger one so beautiful, like a young princess who is in their charge.'

'Well, that is very poetical,' said Mr. Seton, but it was evident that he felt it very difficult to restrain his sense of the ludicrous. 'You see we are too familiar with them,' he said. 'Familiarity, you know, breeds contempt. No, not contempt in the ordinary sense of the word, for two more respectable women don't exist; but I'm not sure that I would just use the word distinguished. It is a very good old family, the Murrays of Murkley—but distinguished, no.'

'I used the word in another sense. It is their

appearance—and manner that is distinguished: as they say in France.'

Upon this the minister broke forth again into a low laugh.

'They are just two very respectable, elderly women,' he said.

Lewis made no reply. It appeared to him that here for the first time he had encountered in his idyllic village the spirit of detraction, the petty scorn of limited minds for people superior to themselves. He felt that, if he spoke, it would only be to call forth the minister's laughter more and more, and raise that feeling of ungenerous opposition in his mind. Lewis did not leave Mr. Seton, as was his first impulse, for he still felt the charm of being able to talk of them, and of probably learning something more about Lilias, even, though it were not in a favourable sense, to be worth lingering for. He walked on by Mr. Seton's side, saying as little as possible, and unaware that there was in his aspect that air of slightly injured dignity which, more than anything else, amuses those who have been engaged in the congenial work of pulling down idols, and making them appear to their worshippers in a proper light. But the

minister was infinitely tickled by Lewis's look. And that anybody should contemplate the Misses Murray in an exalted light was delightfully ridiculous to their neighbour, who had laughed at them and their ways, and criticised their actions more or less for years of his life.

'The ladies,' he said, after a pause, 'have been rather hard upon the little one, or so my wife says—and women understand each other best. They will never let her come out to a young party even at the manse. I hear they are very ambitious for Lilias, and are reserving her, poor innocent women—reserving her,' Mr. Seton said, shaking his head with an expression of amused pity, 'for some grand match.'

'For—some—' Lewis felt as if for one moment the wheels of his being stood still; the earth was arrested in its progress. What could it mean? he asked himself vaguely. A grand match! The words made a wonderful commotion in his ears, but he said to himself that he did not understand what they meant.

'That is it,' said the minister, shaking his head, and with that smile always on his face. 'Poor things! they want her to build up the

family again. I hear they are going to take her to court, and make a great fuss, all in the hopes that she will marry some great potentate or other, and restore the credit of the Murrays. Well, since you think her so lovely as all that,' he added, with a little burst of laughter, as if overcome with the ridicule of the idea, 'it may be that it's us that are the idiots after all, and that the ladies are right.'

Lewis scarcely heard these remarks; his whole being was in a ferment. Up to this moment it had not occurred to him what was the natural way in which to regard this new apparition which had come into his life. He had been wooing (so to speak) her sister, the old sister who was as a mother to Lilias, when this wonder appeared to him, and it was not that his mind changed about Miss Jean, but only that something entirely new and extraordinary burst upon him, something he had never dreamt of before. His words, his thoughts, the very action of his mind was arrested. He had no longer the power of fixing upon that project or any other, his mind being entirely engrossed and occupied by the new thing presented to it. But his feelings had been entirely those of joy and

delight in his discovery. It was something that lighted up the earth and made the whole world more sweet; but it had not yet occurred to him to appropriate this lovely creature to himself, or to make her the centre of his individual enjoyment. Now there burst upon him another revelation, something of an entirely different nature. That she was sweet, but not for him, that her beauty was not intended only to make the whole world happier, but to be a special fountain of joy to one, but that not himself, but some one else. Lewis did not himself understand, in the rush and hurry of his feelings, what was the sentiment which succeeded that vague sensation of happiness in his mind. But he understood that in a moment the minister whom he had been accompanying with so much friendliness on the way became intolerable, and that the very sound of his voice was irritating, and not to be borne. For the sake of appearances he went on with him to a cross-road which they were approaching, that led Lewis did not know whither; but anything was better than to go on with so heartless a companion. He broke off abruptly when he came to this unknown path, saying something about letters to

write, and the necessity of getting back to his inn.

'You'll not get back to your inn that way,' Mr. Seton said; but Lewis paid no attention, indeed scarcely heard him as he hurried on.

He sped along this lonely road in a totally different direction from that he was acquainted with, till he had entirely lost himself and worn himself out, which perhaps in the circumstances was as wise a thing as he could have done. For his mind was agitated with a wonderful variety of new thoughts. He became aware of what that lovely figure was which had glided across his vision, and in a moment swept everything else out of his thoughts. She was more than youth, more than mere beauty and brightness. She was love. The thoughts of last night, that sudden curious contrast which had struck him between the plans and purposes of his own life and those of Philip Stormont, flashed back again and made the situation clear to him in a moment. Here was nature, here was the secret of the world. The broken scenes and visions which had been passing before his eyes since ever he saw her took a different form; instead of only seeing her, he saw himself beside her. He saw

the group of last night changed from Stormont and Katie to Lilias and himself. He walked by her side as he had walked by her sister's; but how differently! He talked to her as he had talked to Miss Jean, but oh! in how changed a tone.

All this went through his mind as he walked mile after mile, always trying a new direction, always failing to recover his ground, or come near any landmark he knew. The sun had been long set, and in any other but these northern skies night would have set in, when he found himself at last approaching the village. He could see that there was a little commotion in the street as he came along, sadly weary and dusty, and beginning to come down from those celestial circles of the imagination, and to remember that he was very hungry, and had not dined. A little group of children broke up and dashed down the road in front of him towards the 'Murkley Arms.'

'Eh, yonder he's coming!' they cried.

Janet, with a very anxious countenance, was standing in the doorway.

'Eh, sir,' she said, 'is this you? And what has keepit ye frae your dinner? We have had

a maist anxious night looking out for ye, and wondering what could have happened. Adam's away doun to the water-side, and I've sent to the manse and the Castle, and every place I could think of, we were that alarmed.'

'Why should you be alarmed?' said Lewis. 'The fact is, I lost my way.'

'I'm real glad to see it's nae waur,' said Janet. 'There's been ane here frae Kilmorley keen, keen to see ye. It was just the writer's clerk, and that gied us a fright; and he didna seem that sure about your name, and he said he had instructions just to bide and no to leave till he had seen ye. But I sent him away with a flea in his lug,' said Janet. 'I said you were just real respectable, as we've found you, sir, and one of the Murrays, kent folk, and taken a hantle notice of by the Murkley ladies, and how daured he come here to set your friends against ye? But for a' that I got a terrible fright, Mr. Murray. I thought maybe ye had got wit o' his coming, and had just slippit away, and we would never have heard tell of ye again.'

'Why should I slip away?' cried Lewis, astonished, his conviction of innocence being too strong to permit him to entertain at the mo-

ment any alarm as to the consequences that might follow if he were found to have presented himself under a name which was not his own.

Janet gave him a confused, repentant, yet penetrating look.

'Deed, I canna tell,' she said, somewhat abashed; 'but how was I to ken that there mightna be reasons, and the man so awfu' curious about you, and him the writer's clerk? Gentlemen are whiles overtaken, just the same as poor folk. It might have been siller, or it might have been——But, dear bless me, what is the use of speakin', when here ye are, just your ain sel', and no put aboot at a'; and the dinner's spoilt, but nae mair harm done.'

'My good Mrs. Janet,' said Lewis, 'I am much obliged to you, but you need not entertain any fears about me. I am not afraid of any writer's clerk. What is a writer, by the way?' he said, smiling, pausing as he was about to enter.

She gazed at him with round eyes of amazement.

'What is a writer? Well, I always said you were an innocent young man—I was aye sure there would be nothing in it—but you must ken

very little indeed, sir, if you have never come across a writer. He's just a—well, maybe sometimes a terror to evil-doers; I would not say—but a great fyke and trouble mony a time to them that do well. He is one that will gather in the siller that's owin' ye, that ye canna get yoursel', and pretend it's a' for your gude, syne take his percentage and his profit, till there's more of it gangs into his pocket than yours. He is one that——'

'I see—a lawyer of some sort. You thought I was perhaps running away from my creditors,' Lewis said, with a laugh.

Janet gave him a guilty glance. 'Mony a grand gentleman has done that, and lived to pay them a' to the last farden, and never been a preen the waur.'

Lewis laughed till all the attendant children, who had been looking on, waiting for the penny promised them for intimating his approach, laughed too in sympathy.

'I owe you more than I owe anybody else,' he said; 'but we'll talk of that after dinner, for I'm famishing now.'

## CHAPTER XV.

LEWIS woke up next morning a different man. His light-hearted youth and easy views had gone from him. The musings of the night had only showed him the position in which he was, without showing him any way out of it. He had all but pledged himself to one woman, placed himself at her disposal; and his heart had gone out to another. He felt that life would not be worth living, nor the world have any charm for him, unless he could secure Lilias as the companion of his existence. Yet at the same time he recognised that it was the sister of Lilias to whom so lightly, thinking, as it now seemed, nothing of it, he had offered that life as he might have offered a flower. Was there ever a more terrible dilemma for a young man? And he had not found it out at first. It had not been till the terrible prose of the minister set the case

fully before him that he had recognised the complication which was so novel, so strange, yet to him so overwhelming. Love! how could he love this creature whom he had seen but once, of whom he knew nothing? But even to ask that question seemed a sort of blasphemy against her, against the strange and potent sweetness of his own emotion. Knew nothing! he knew everything; he knew her, the wonder of creation! To see her was enough. What doubt, what hesitation was possible? 'There is none like her, none;' he was as much convinced of that as if he had watched all her ways for years. And to think that he had not had the patience to wait, or any instinct to tell him that she was here! This was the strange, the incomprehensible thing. It was a fatality. So it had been ordained in Greek plays and uncompromising tragedy. That everything which was sweetest should come too late—that one should be on the very verge of the loveliest road to Paradise, and all unawares should choose another which led a different way.

Lewis awoke to a sense, no longer of a world enhanced, and made infinitely sweeter and fairer by the presence in it of a creature more

beautiful and delightful than he had ever before dreamt of, but of a universe which had gone suddenly out of joint, where the possibilities of blessedness were counteracted by malign influences, and fate took pleasure in turning happiness into trouble: one way and another the calmly smiling day, the happy commonplace, the matter-of-course existence had come to an end for him. It was very summary and very complete. He looked back for a few days, and thought how easily he had made up his mind about Miss Jean, how calmly he had determined to make her a present of his existence, with a kind of horror. In reality it had been a very small part of his existence which he had resolved to give up to her: but this he did not recollect in the excitement of his thoughts. He had meant to live as he pleased, always returning between whiles to the kind, elderly, indulgent wife who, he felt sure, would require no more of him; but this now seemed a sort of blasphemy to him, a travesty of the life which a man should wish to live with the true mate and companion who would share his every thought. He rejected his former thoughts with a self-disgust that was full of anger. It was odious to him to know that

he had been capable of so thinking. All that had altered in a moment; not with the first sight of love, and what it was, in the person of Lilias, but with the first clear perception that this fair creature was some one's destined bride, but not his. In the irony of fate not his; revealed to him only after it was too late, after he had mortgaged his existence and bound himself to a world so much pettier and poorer than that of which she held the key.

Up to this moment there had been in the heart of Lewis very little questioning of fate; he had taken all that came in his way with, on the whole, a cheerful composure. The loss of his parents had been made up to him in a wonderful way. The loss of Sir Patrick was so completely natural that there could be no repining in the sorrow, honest sorrow deeply felt, but without any bitterness, with which his young dependent mourned him. All this had been legitimate; he had accepted it as inevitable and necessary. Some natural tears he dropped, but wiped them soon. He had taken his life in the same unquestioning matter-of-fact way, almost unconscious of any deeper necessity for satisfaction in it than that which lay on the surface,

the honest discharge of such duties as he knew, the honest enjoyment of such pleasures as were congenial to him. He did not know that he wanted anything more. It was not that Lewis had not heard the murmurings of bitter philosophy in many a tone. He had heard his old patron discourse upon the deceptions of life, he had heard Sir Patrick's friends talking, snarling over the lies and delusions with which, to them, the world was full; but the youth in him had rebelled, had laughed, had attributed all this to the ill-temper of age and disappointment, sometimes pitying, always certain that to him nothing of the kind would ever come. And there had been nothing in his existence to contradict this easy confidence. Nothing had gone amiss with him; there had been no occasion for him to rail at fortune, which had always been so good to him, or to find any delusions in the brightness of his life. It had been without complications, without mystery; nothing in it that was not straightforward, until he came to Murkley; and it seemed to him that the harshest moralist could not have objected to his innocent little artifice, his adoption of a name to which he had indeed a good title, even

though it was taken up with intention to deceive. And even the deception had a good reason. It seemed hard to poor Lewis that coming thus innocently, with intention to do well, to right wrong, to atone for injury, he should have been made to suffer. It seemed to him cruel. His imagination did not blame Providence, which was too far off and too solemn to be made responsible for such matters, but he found a little consolation in recalling to his mind the old snarlings he used to hear, the complaints against fate, whatever that was. Why, why should such a malign chance have fallen on him, whose wish was to be just, to be true to everybody? It seemed to Lewis that he had good reason to complain. To be sure, he did not very well know against whom his complaint could be directed, but he felt it all the same.

He was late of getting up; he was slow to go out; he did not care what he did with himself; sometimes his impulse was to hurry to the Castle, to take advantage as long as he could of the permission which certainly had been given him, on the mere chance of perhaps seeing *her* again. But what was the use of seeing

*her?* It was to Miss Jean his visit would have to be made. It was she who had been the aim of his devotion; and at that thought Lewis laid down the hat which he had snatched up, and threw himself in despair upon his seat. No, better to hurry away, never to put himself within the reach of her influence again, to do nothing at least to deepen and increase it. And then he began to say to himself, what matter? no one but himself should ever know the strong temptation which had seized him, the enchantment she had exercised unawares. It would do no harm to anyone but himself, if he did see her once more, and, if he suffered for it, there would be compensation in the sweetness of her presence; he would have had the sunshine at least, even if the cloud were all the blacker afterwards.

Throughout the whole of this self-discussion it will be seen that the idea of being unfaithful to his first declared object never occurred to Lewis. He believed that he had made Miss Jean fully aware of the proposal he meant to make her. He had told Miss Margaret of it. He had no doubt that they must have communicated with each other on the subject, and

that the mere fact of his reception at the house was a proof that he was viewed under the aspect of an accepted lover. And, this being the case, nothing in the world would have made Lewis flinch from the position he had assumed. It seemed to him now like going from the glory of the skies and free air into the dim and shadowed atmosphere indoors. Lilias would have meant the garden of Eden, the perennial, never-exhausted idyll of human blessedness. Miss Jean meant a domestic interior somewhat dull, grey, full of dimness and shadows. But all the glory and blessedness in the world could not make that possible which was impossible, as Lewis knew; and what was impossible was to leave in the lurch the woman he had wooed. That was the one thing he could not do, however hard the price he had to pay. It did not come even the length of a discussion in his mind. It was too certain, too self-evident for anything of the kind. He made no question about it. Thus sometimes he jumped up, thinking he would go at once to the Castle, and linger there till it was time to see her again; sometimes sat down again, saying to himself why should he do it? why should he

add to his pain? Better to keep that one vision as the only one, a sort of poem, a revelation for one moment, and no more. In the lives of the saints such things have been told; how they had seen a celestial vision, sometimes printing marks in their very flesh, and had seen no more. Lewis felt that it was perhaps profane to compare with that supreme sort of revelation his sudden view of the woman whom he could never forget, who might have made of his life a something glorious and noble, altogether different from its natural common-place. It was profane, but he could not help it: only the highest images could express what he meant. That mere glimpse of her, attended by so little self-disclosure on her part, almost without the communication of words, had it not already made such an impression on his soul as could never wear out? It had revealed another world to him, it had shown him what life might be, what it never could be, and with what a strange, lamentable misconception he had chosen the lower place!

He was still in this uncertain condition, walking to the window now and then, looking out vaguely, pacing about the room, pausing to

look at himself in the dingy mirror on the mantelpiece, taking up his hat and putting it down again, not able to decide what he should do, when his attention was caught by the sound of steps coming up the stairs, and the voice of Janet directing some one to come 'This way, sir, this way.'

'Our young gentleman took a walk yestreen, ower long, and lost his way, so he's no out this morning, which is just very lucky,' Janet was saying.

Lewis threw down his hat with an impatient exclamation. It was Stormont, no doubt, he who could do what he pleased, who had taken his own way and satisfied himself, though not as Lewis would have done: or perhaps the minister who had laughed and spoken of the queen of beauty and love as a 'poor little thing.' There sprang up in his mind immediately a sort of hatred of them both as thus problematically preventing him from seeing her again: for he no sooner felt that he could not do it than it seemed to him he had made up his mind to do it, and was in the very act of sallying forth. But it was neither Stormont nor the minister who was shown in by Janet. She opened the

door, and put her head in first with a certain caution.

'This'll be yon gentleman,' she said, and made a sort of interrogative pause, as much as to say no one should enter did Lewis disapprove. Then she opened the door wider, and added, 'A gentleman to see you, Mr. Murray,' in a louder voice.

To say that Janet paused after this for a moment to satisfy herself what sort of greeting passed between them, and whether or not she had done well to introduce the stranger, is scarcely necessary. She stood with the door in her hand, and the most sympathetic curiosity in her mind: but when she saw the new-comer hurry forward with a sort of chuckling laugh, holding out his hand and exclaiming, in familiar accents, 'So this is you! It was just borne in upon me that it must be you,' Janet withdrew well pleased.

'It's a' just as it should be,' she said to Adam, who had lingered to see the result. 'I'll no say our young lad is pleased: but it's a friend, it's no a spy nor a sheriff's officer.'

'It's a writer from Edinburgh,' said Adam; 'I've seen him in the Parliament house.'

'Hoot awa' with your Parliament house!' cried Janet. 'It's ten years since you were in Edinburgh, and how can ye mind if he's a writer or no? Besides, I told ye, he's no feared for ony writer; he asked me, bless the callent! what a writer was?'

Adam was more sceptical, having, as he thought, more knowledge of the world. 'Ye may ken the thing and no ken the name,' he said.

But even he shouldered his rod and stalked away with a relieved mind; for Lewis had so moved the household at the 'Murkley Arms,' and even the village itself, in his favour, that the writer would have fared badly who had meant mischief to the kind and friendly visitor who had conciliated everybody. Janet, considering all the circumstances, was of opinion that, after the greeting she had seen, it would be natural and desirable to put in hand certain preparations for luncheon of a more than usually elaborate kind.

But if his humble friends were consoled, Lewis was taken entirely by surprise. He said, 'Mr. Allenerly!' in a tone between astonishment and dismay.

'It is just me,' said the lawyer, 'and I had a moral conviction it was you I should find, though no one knew the name of Grantley——'

'Hush!' cried Lewis, in alarm, raising his hand.

'It is not a nice thing in any circumstances,' said the new-comer, 'for a man to disown his own name.'

There was an impulse of anger in Lewis' mind not at all natural to him.

'It is with no evil intention, and it is no case of disowning my name. My kind god-father, my patron—you are free to call him what you will—wished it to be so. I have adopted his suggestion, that is all.'

'But here, of all places in the world!' cried Mr. Allenerly—'it is the imprudence I am thinking of. You have a good right to it, if you please—but here! Have they not put you through your catechism to know what Murrays you were of? That would be the first thing they would do——'

'Miss Margaret has done so, I allow.'

'Miss Margaret! By my conscience, you have got far ben already! And she never found you out? and you have got footing there?'

A pleasurable sense of success soothed the exasperation and pain in the young man's mind.

'It was for that I came here,' he said.

'I just guessed as much. I said to my wife, "He's of the romantic sort; he'll be after little Lilias, take my word for it, as soon as he hears of her existence." And so you've done it! Well, Mr. Murray, if that's what I'm to call you, I congratulate you—that is, if you get clear of Miss Margaret. She's grand at a cross-examination, as I have good reason to know. If you satisfied her——'

'I think I satisfied her—I go there—I was going now, if you had not come,' said Lewis, playing with his hat, which was on the table. It seemed to him that to get rid of this visitor was the best, and, indeed, only thing he wished for. 'After little Lilias!' The words rang and tingled through his head; he did not wish to be asked any questions, for already he felt as if his countenance must betray him; he could not laugh as his visitor did. It was impossible for him even to respond with a smile. And that fixed gravity was something which had never before been seen on Lewis's face.

Mr. Allenerly cast a curious look upon him,

and then he in turn put down his hat upon the table and drew forward a chair.

'You have made your way in what seems a surprising manner,' he said, 'but you do not seem very cheery about it. You will excuse me if I am pressing—it is a thing I should have been keen to push on, if I had not known that things of this kind must come of themselves; and, if you will pardon me for saying so, I wanted to know more of you before I would have put you in the way of Miss Lilias, poor thing. She is very young, and the first that comes has a great chance with a young girl. But her sisters have very high notions; they are ambitious for her, I have always heard, and whether they would have the sense to see that a bird in the hand is worth two, or any number, in the bush——'

'I cannot let you continue in a mistake,' said Lewis, pale and grave. 'It is not as you think; the thing is different——'

He paused, and Mr. Allenerly paused too, and looked at him with a doubtful air.

'Do you mean,' he said, 'to tell me that you, a young man from foreign parts, that knows neither England nor Scotland—a young man

that is your own master, going where you please —do you mean to say that you come here to a small Scotch village, and settle down in a country public-house (for it's little better) for weeks with no object? I have a respect for you, Mr. Grantley, but I cannot swallow that.'

'I did not say so,' said Lewis, with a gravity that was exaggerated, and full of the dignified superiority of offended youth; but he could not defend himself from those impulses of imprudence which were natural to him. 'It is not necessary, I suppose,' he said, 'that my object should be exactly as you have stated. There are three sisters——'

Mr. Allenerly made no reply at first, but gazed at him with astonished eyes. Then he suddenly burst into a peal of laughter.

'This is too good a joke,' he said, 'you rogue, you deceiver! Do you think it's a fair thing to play off your fun upon your man of business? None o' that—none o' that! No but that's the best joke I've heard this year or more. I must tell my wife of that. There's three sisters, says he! Lord! but that beats all.'

'I am at a loss,' said Lewis, more dignified than ever, 'to understand the cause of your

mirth; but, when you have had it out, perhaps you will let me inform you of the real state of affairs.'

'That is just what I am ready to do,' the lawyer said, in his turn offended, 'more than ready. The ladies are my clients, Mr. ——'

'It was my godfather's desire that my name should be Murray.'

'Then Murray be it!' cried the writer, with vehemence. 'What have I to do with your name? If it comes to that, ye may call yourself royal Stuart, or Louis XVI., or anything ye please, for me.'

'Don't let us quarrel, Mr. Allenerly; you have been very kind to me,' said Lewis, suddenly struck with the absurdity of this discussion. He laughed as he held out his hand. 'Come,' he said, 'do not be so hot, and I will tell you. But why should you laugh? I have paid my court to the second of the two sisters. She is a lady whom I respect very much. She is sweet and good. A laugh I cannot endure upon her account. I have endeavoured to do what I could to please her. I hope I may have—a little—succeeded,' Lewis said. The supernatural gravity and dignity had gone out of his face;

instead of these, there came a smile which had some pathos in it. There was a slight quiver in his sensitive mouth. It was not vanity, but a certain sorrowful pleasure, a sort of compassionate satisfaction which was in the smile; it checked the lawyer's laugh more effectually than any big words could have done. But he looked with great and growing surprise into the young man's face.

'Miss Jean?' he said, almost timidly, with a sudden sense of something that lay behind.

'Miss Jean,' Lewis said, with a little affirmative nod several times repeated. 'She loves music very much. She has a fine and tender soul. I think no one knows what she is. They think her only gentle and weak.'

'That is true—that is true. She is a good woman; but——'

'I will confess to you,' said Lewis, 'I heard that there were three, and it troubled me. I had thought there would be one who was the heir after your English way. I was in much trouble what to do. Then it was evident that this good Miss Jean was she whom I could have most access to, and I loved her on account of the

music; but I did not know,' he added, ingenuously, with a sigh, 'I will acknowledge it to you—I did not know that the other lady was young; I did not know she was—what I found her yesterday. Ah! I saw her only yesterday for the first time.'

Mr. Allenerly, who had jumped up in great interest and excitement, and had been pacing about the room all this time, here came up to Lewis, and struck him on the shoulder.

'You are neither Scotch nor English,' he said, 'but you're a fine fellow; I would say that before the world. You came here to restore the money to them in a real generous way without thinking of yourself; but cheer up, my lad! Miss Jean has nothing to do with it. It is Lilias that is the heir. What do I mean? I will soon tell you what I mean. Margaret and Jean have a small estate in the south country that was their mother's. They have nothing to do with Murkley. Boys are always looked for, and little thought was taken for them. But when the general married his second wife, the Castle and a bit of the old land, too little, far too little, was put in the marriage settlement—and Lilias is the

heir of that—Lilias the little one, the young one, the bonnie one. You are in greater luck than you thought.'

'Then it will be no restoration at all,' said Lewis, his face growing longer and paler with disappointment and dismay.

'Not if you persevere in your present fancy—but that is just nonsense—you must turn your thoughts into another channel.'

'You speak,' said Lewis, 'as if one's thoughts were like a stream of water. That is not to be considered at all; it is too late.'

'Then it is all settled—— Has Miss Jean—the Lord preserve us—accepted ye?' Mr. Allenerly said.

'Does that matter?' said Lewis. 'I have laid my homage at her feet; it is for her to take, if she will.'

'But—' cried the lawyer, in dismay, 'don't ye see that all will be spoiled? that your very purpose will be balked—that everything will go wrong? If it is not settled beyond remedy, you must just do what many a man has done before. You must draw back before it is too late——'

'Draw back—and leave a lady insulted—— You forget'—the young man spoke with much dignity—'that, though I am not a Murray, I am a gentleman,' Lewis said.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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